PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 87

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
18 NOVEMBER—29 NOVEMBER 1985

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IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 87**

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 18 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of full-time workers, male and female, respectively, in Rhymney Valley, Mid-Glamorgan and Wales earning less than 90 per cent. of the respective United Kingdom averages.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Nicholas Edwards): According to the results of the new earnings survey undertaken in April 1985, the Wales figure is 54 per cent. for both males and females. The corresponding figures for Mid-Glamorgan are 57 per cent. for males and 56 per cent. for females. Similar information is not available for Rhymney Valley.

Mr. Davies: Will the Secretay of State confirm that wages for those in Wales who are employed are not only among the lowest in real terms in the United Kingdom, but in relative terms are falling? If the Government's view is correct, that lower wages mean more employment, how can the Secretary of State justify the record level of unemployment in Wales? How much lower does he want wage levels in Wales to fall before unemployment starts to fall?

Mr. Edwards: The crucial fact which explains the difference in wage levels is the different structures of industry and service employment in different areas. The point about wage levels is their effect upon wage costs. We are concerned about wages being pushed up in a way that adds to wage costs and makes firms uncompetitive. It must be an advantage in any area to ensure that the firms that operate there do so competitively.

Mr. Rowlands: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware, how much young people resent the proposal that wages council protection for them should be scrapped, in particular holiday rights protection, and fear that this will usher in a new era of exploitation of young people? The right hon. Gentleman may be interested in Victorian values, but we know that they are bad, not good, values.

Mr. Edwards: There is a great deal of evidence that the constraints imposed by the wages councils as they have applied to young people have destroyed job opportunities for them. There is also a great deal of evidence in countries which do not have the same restrictions—for example, Germany—that job opportunities for young people are thereby greatly strengthened. I should have thought that that ought to be the priority for the hon. Gentleman, but it does not seem to be.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Secretary of State accept that in England last year the average wage for men in manufacturing industry was £159, whereas in Wales it was nothing like that figure? Is the objective of the Secretary of State to keep down wages, in a vain bid to try to get work to Wales, or to try to increase the standard of living in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: I said that what matters is that wage costs in an industry should be competitive. I welcome the fact that successful industries are able to pay higher wages to their employees. As we diversify and strengthen the Welsh economy, as we are doing, I hope that there will be higher earnings for a great many people.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Will not the Government's proposals on Sunday trading further undermine the wages and conditions of the people who live in the valleys and towns of Wales? Would it not be better for the

Government, after six and a half years, to concentrate on getting people back to work regularly for five days, from Monday to Friday?

Mr. Edwards: The important point is that individuals and companies should be able to choose on which days of the week they wish to trade. I see no reason to believe, particularly with the safeguards that will be built into the legislation, that there will be the kinds of effects about which the hon. Gentleman speaks. That has not been the experience in Scotland, which does not have the kind of protective legislation that exists in England.

Mr. Best: Is it not typical of the Opposition and their head in the sand attitude that they are still unaware that the majority of people in Wales want Sunday trading?

Mr. Edwards: Above all, it should not be imposed by law. It should be a matter of individual choice and conscience whether people want to shop on Sunday, and traders should be able to decide whether they wish to open their businesses on Sunday.

House Building

2. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to seek to ensure that the level of house building meets the current demand and anticipated demand.

12. **Mr. Coleman** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest number of housing starts in Wales this year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): Substantial resources are available to local authorities for housing. So far as new house building in the public sector is concerned, the Government are giving priority to the housing associations, whose starts in the first nine months of this year were 200 per cent. higher than in the same period of 1984. Local authority spending, on the other hand, has changed emphasis towards much needed renovation of the existing stock.

In all, 6,418 housing starts were reported in the first nine months of 1985.

Mr. Anderson: A year ago the Minister's predecessor told me that 11,000 new units of accommodation were required each year to keep pace with demand. Each year since 1980 we have failed to come near that total. Does the Welsh Office realise that that accummulated deficit, year on year, is building up an increasing housing crisis?

Mr. Robinson: We have not changed our overall objectives. Last year's completions, which totalled 9,209, were the best since 1980.

Mr. Coleman: Now that the Minister's answers have revealed the desperate position being faced by the homeless in Wales, will he reveal just a little more and tell us how much of the Chancellor's largesse is likely to come back to Wales for housing? When will we receive the proceeds from the sale of council houses promised repeatedly by his right hon. Friend? When will that money be spent on council housing and housing generally in Wales?

Mr. Robinson: My right hon. Friend is at this moment considering the implications of the Chancellor's autumn statement for Wales. An announcement will be made at the appropriate time.

As regards capital receipts on the sale of council houses, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that the 1980 legislation made it clear that those receipts would not be available for spend in any one year. They are linked to the overall position on capital spending, and they remain so.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is my hon. Friend in a position to assess the performance of the various housing authorities in the light of the resources available to them?

Mr. Robinson: We believe that housing associations are making a substantial contribution to housing in Wales. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will bear that in mind when making allocations in the coming year.

Mr. Barry Jones: Why are Welsh housing authorities allowed to spend only 15 per cent. of their council house sale receipts, while English authorities are allowed to spend 20 per cent.?

Mr. Robinson: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, it is a combination of allocation. The fact that local authorities are allowed to spend 15 per cent. in the coming year is reflected in the overall sums that come from central Government sources.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: By playing with percentages, the Minister has shown a substantial increase in the number of starts in the housing association sector, but will he address himself in greater detail to the question posed by his hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Sir R. Gower) and study the role of the housing associations in Wales? Will he give an assurance that, in the allocation, there will be a further substantial increase to meet the needs of housing in Wales and also the commitment which the housing associations tell us they can fulfil?

Mr. Robinson: The current programme for the Housing Corporation this year was £43 million. As I said earlier, my right hon. Friend is considering the allocations for the coming year, but he is already on record as saying that increased resources for housing are a priority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It was encouraging to read last week's statement by the South Wales House-Builders Federation about the record progress in house building, but I noticed that its only major constraint was the availability of land. For that reason, or any other, has my hon. Friend instructed local councils to sell certain school playing fields?

Mr. Robinson: It is not our policy to instruct councils on the manner in which they should use their resources or dispose of surplus land. However, where councils have surplus land, it is our policy to encourage them to sell it.

Education

3. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the present state of education in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Wyn Roberts): As our White Paper "Better Schools" made clear, although there have been marked improvements in recent years in both primary and secondary education, sustained efforts will be needed to ensure that all our schools achieve the high standards of our best schools. The Government's education policies for the schools are aimed at securing that objective. I must add that the present strike is doing serious damage to the education of our children.

Mr. Howells: Are not the hon. Gentleman's ministerial colleagues responsible for the prolonged pay dispute with the teachers? Will he accordingly advise them to get on with the job of trying to sort out this dispute, for the sake of children, teachers and parents?

Mr. Roberts: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Government are responsible for prolonging this dispute — quite the reverse. The Government are not intransigent. They have shown their helpfulness by promising to make a further £1·25 billion available over the next four years. That will be in addition to whatever award is received by the teachers by way of increases in wages during those years.

Mr. Raffan: Is my hon. Friend aware that Clwyd county council is prepared to spend up to £2 million of its normal capital allocation on developing the castle and grounds at Bodelwyddan, at a time when it proposes to defer the school capital programme? Is that not a scandal? Will my hon. Friend bring the utmost pressure to bear on the county council to persuade it to concentrate on its statutory obligations, the principal one being education?

Mr. Roberts: The development at Bodelwyddan castle is a matter for Clwyd county council. I have visited the technical and vocational education Initiative established at the castle, and been very much impressed by it.

Dr. Marek: Is the Minister aware that Labour councillors on Clwyd county council have been against the development and that Conservative councillors have been pushing it? Will the hon. Gentleman have a word with them over the matter?

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is confirming what I have already said, that this is primarily a matter for the county council.

Mr. Best: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have been informed that the National Association of Schoolmasters and the National Union of Teachers have selected both his constituency and mine for special disruptive action? Does that not show a cynical disregard for the welfare and education of our children, and prove beyond any shadow of doubt that much of the present action is politically motivated and has nothing to do with the interests of the teachers?

Mr. Roberts: There is much cynical disregard, in particular, of the interests of the children, about which we are most concerned, although we are also concerned about the interests of the teachers. The Government, as I have said, have shown their helpfulness by saying that further money can be made available over the next four years, provided that we get changes in the pay structure and conditions of service that we require.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: If the Minister wishes to raise the quality of teaching in our schools, will he implement the market law, which is that the higher the wages paid to the teachers, the better will be the quality of the teachers that we have in our schools?

Mr. Roberts: We accept, and have said, that there are shortages of teachers in certain subjects, and that we should like to pay more to attract people to take up teaching in those subjects. That is one of the aims of the restructuring proposed by the Government.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Barry Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are unemployed in Wales and in Clwyd; by how much this has increased since May 1979, as a total and as a percentage; and how many are long-term unemployed as a total and as a percentage.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 10 October 1985 there were 182,734 unemployed claimants in Wales, an increase of 105,534, or 136·7 per cent., since May 1979. On 10 October 1985 there were 24,982 unemployed claimants in Clwyd. A comparable claimant-based figure for May 1979 in Clwyd is not available. In October 1985, 77,412, or 42·4 per cent., had been unemployed for more than one year in Wales, while for Clwyd the figures were 9,835, or 39·4 per cent.

Mr. Jones: In the Deeside travel-to-work area, 13,000 people are jobless, and manufacturing jobs have recently been lost at Deeside Titanium, P D Cans and at Catharall's Brick at Buckley. Will the Secretary of State urgently consider how he may make available the accounts of Buckley Brick, so that the work force may challenge the proposed closure? Does he know of the brickworkers' discontent at the low redundancy payments being offered to them? How will he help the brickworkers at Buckley?

Mr. Edwards: The hon. Gentleman will have an Adjournment debate on this and related employment issues later in the week. I suggest that would be a better time at which to discuss the affairs of the company. The hon. Gentleman listed job losses, but he might have listed the impressive number of job gains that have been announced during the same period. For example, there was another announcement of jobs created at Sharp, and the company to which he referred has announced some investment at Lane End, Buckley. He should give both sides of the story.

Mr. Harvey: What would be the effect on foreign confidence, and hence employment, in Wales if a future Labour Government were to implement their proposals to spend an additional £51 billion in public expenditure?

Mr. Edwards: I agree with my hon. Friend that it would severely dent the confidence of investors, who would recall exactly what happened when a similar policy was implemented by the Labour Government, who had to go cap in hand to the IMF, which cut capital programmes by 45 per cent.

Mr. Foot: How does the Secretary of State reconcile those terrible and tragic figures with the renewed boast of the Chancellor of the Exchequer about a week ago that Britain is in the third, the fourth or the fifth year of national recovery? Has Wales had a share of that national recovery? Will the right hon. Gentleman, even at this eleventh hour, stop the cut in regional aid that he is carrying through, which could only add to those terrible figures?

Mr. Edwards: I should have thought that the right hon. Gentleman would welcome the growth in the economy and the fact that it is likely to continue in the year ahead, just as I hope he welcomes the fact that there has been a small reduction in unemployment in Wales during the past month. We have announced a range of measures especially to help the long-term unemployed. I am sure the right hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that the number of community programme places in Wales will increase from

9,600 in April to more than 20,000 places to be filled by June 1986. That is a sign of the Government's determination to meet the special problems of areas such as Wales.

Mr. Terlezki: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, had it not been for his efforts and those of his colleagues at the Welsh Office, trotting the globe to entice foreign industries to come to Wales, and had not those industries come to Wales, unemployment in the Principality would have been much worse?

Mr. Edwards: Hon. Members on both sides of the House will welcome the substantial inward investment that has taken place and the fact that about a quarter of all the inward investment to the United Kingdom for two years has come to Wales. That gives the lie to the absurd proposition of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that the Government do not have an effective regional policy.

NCB (Closures)

5. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, when he last met the chairman of the National Coal Board, he discussed the recent closure programme.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I met the chairman of the National Coal Board on 14 November and discussed a range of matters affecting the Welsh coalfields.

Mr. Powell: That was not much of a reply, considering the damage that is being caused to parts of Wales, especially Ogmore. I should tell the Secretary of State —the coalfield rapist of Wales—that since 1979 he has closed or been responsible for the closure of the Caerau and the Coegnant collieries in the Llynfi valley. St. John's colliery—the only colliery left in that valley—is subject to the new review procedure. Wyndham Western colliery, which was the only one left in the Ogmore valley after 1979, has also been closed. There is also now a threat to close Garw colliery, which is the only colliery left in the Garw valley.

Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on the promise that was made by Philip Weekes, reported in the *Western Mail*, to the Welsh miners who were on strike in April that we would have a new colliery in the Margham area? What does he intend to do——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us now hear the answer to that.

Mr. Edwards: My original answer was precise and answered the main question. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that south Wales deep mine losses in 1984-85 amounted to £188 million and that, against that loss-making background, it was inevitable that measures would be taken to deal with the situation. I should have thought that he would welcome the fact that productivity is increasing significantly, that the operating cost per tonne has fallen sharply and that some £38 million of capital expenditure has been announced for 1985-86 for the south Wales coalfield.

Mr. Grist: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the worst enemy that the coal industry in south Wales has is the NUM, associated and allied with some of its friends on the Opposition Benches?

Mr. Edwards: The disastrous strike led by Mr. Scargill and encouraged by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) has probably had as catastrophic an effect on the south Wales coalfield as it has had elsewhere on the interests of the NUM.

Mrs. Clwyd: Has the Secretary of State had the opportunity to examine the Department of Trade and Industry survey into the post-redundancy experiences of Welsh steel workers? If so, will he say how relevant those findings are to the experiences of coal miners in Wales?

Mr. Edwards: A lesson that we learnt from the experience in the steel industry was the valuable work done by BSC Industries. That is one reason why a substantial share of the comparable operation launched by the NCB has been devoted to south Wales, and I am glad to say that it is already associated with about 600 new jobs.

Sir Raymond Gower: Is my right hon. Friend aware that whereas the steel organisation which was set up to deal with redundancy gave valuable advice to the recipients of redundancy benefit in that industry, it appears that the NCB does not do that, and that no comparable advice is, given to recipients of redundancy in the coal industry? Will he make representations to the NCB and the Secretary of State for Energy to ensure that similar advice is given to recipients of redundancy in the coal industry?

Mr. Edwards: The new NCB industry organisation is, among other things, helping to fund local enterprise trusts and organisations geared to provide that type of advice. However, as my hon. Friend has made a specific point, I shall draw it to the attention of the management of the NCB and follow it up.

Mr. Barry Jones: The right hon. Gentleman seems incapable of understanding the impact of closures on vulnerable valley communities. These communities are now facing social and economic crises, yet the right hon. Gentleman seems to have no sympathy for them. Is he aware that 11,000 jobs have been lost since 1979 in the south Wales coalfield? Is he further aware that 1·5 million tonnes of prime coking coal are being imported into south Wales this year? We feel a sense of betrayal of the Margam deep mine. We look to him to help us on that project.

Mr. Edwards: If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that the cost per tonne of deep-mined coal bears a relationship to the amount of coal imported, he does not begin to understand anything. He should ask the steel industry about the relationship. I should have thought that he would want a competitive steel industry that can buy coal at a competitive price.

Hill Farming

6. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he is satisfied with the present state of hill farming in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Following the abnormal weather experienced during the summer months this year, farm incomes are expected to be adversely affected in 1985-86. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on 8 October that assistance will be given towards the extra costs incurred this year and the amount and extent of that assistance is under consideration. Announcements about this and the rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances for 1986 will be made shortly.

Mr. Livsey: When will the Secretary of State pay the hill livestock compensatory allowances? Will he pay them in full?

Mr. Edwards: The hill livestock compensatory allowances are being considered at the moment. It is only within the past 10 days or so that we have had the normal meetings with the unions. They have expressed the hope that an advance payment of allowances will be made this year. The Government are well aware of the need to make early payments to relieve the problems that arise from this year's very wet weather.

Mr. Harvey: Because of the serious difficulties suffered by hill farmers, will my right hon. Friend consider introducing a generous outgoers scheme on the milk side?

Mr. Edwards: We already have such an outgoers scheme. Not only has it helped those on the milk side who wished to leave the industry, but it has enabled us to put more than half the Welsh producers back to their original 1983 base levels. We do not have any plans to introduce a further scheme. The European Commission has put forward tentative proposals for a European scheme, and we shall have to consider them in due course.

Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for unemployment in *(a)* Newport, *(b)* Gwent and *(c)* Wales; what were the equivalent figures in May 1979; and what was the percentage increase in each case.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: On 10 October 1985 there were 12,911, 29,173 and 182,734 unemployed claimants in the Newport travel-to-work area, Gwent and Wales respectively. The equivalent figure for Wales in May 1979 was 77,200. The increase was 136·7 per cent. Comparable figures for 1979 in Newport and Gwent are not available because of changes to travel-to-work area boundaries and the move to claimant-based figures.

Mr. Hughes: Has the right hon. Gentleman seen last week's report by the Gwent county engineer, Mr. Howard Pullen, who pointed out that, in the past seven years, cash for road maintenance has fallen in real terms by 45 per cent.? Does this not explain why our roads are in such a shocking condition? I remind the right hon. Gentleman that, even in the 1930s, Conservative Governments had the wisdom to take people out of the dole queue in great numbers and to employ them on road maintenance.

Mr. Edwards: Of course I appreciate the need for road maintenance. That is why we have carried out the largest and most expensive road maintenance project yet undertaken in Wales. This is being carried out in Gwent on the M4. The need for a continuing maintenance programme will be very much in mind as I take our decisions on the road programme, which results from the public expenditure announcement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Sir John Stradling Thomas: In view of the figures for Gwent, Wales and Newport that were cited by my right hon. Friend, will he assure me that he will do everything in his power to ensure that, when the Ministry of Defence finally makes up its mind about the disposal of the Vauxhall camp at Monmouth, the Department has it firmly in mind that there should be employment opportunities for Monmouth? I have been trying to find out the Ministry's plans. I hope that my right hon. Friend has greater success than I have had.

Mr. Edwards: I note my hon. Friend's point. I shall take the matter up with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who has responsibility for that matter.

Agricultural Support

8. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total amount spent by his Department on agricultural support in Wales in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The sum of £82·2 million was spent by my Department in support of agriculture in Wales in 1984-85.

In addition, certain other payments under the CAP were made by the intervention board for agricultural produce, including payments in Wales amounting to about £4·7 million on the beef variable premium scheme; about £21·4 million on the sheep variable premium scheme; and about £0·8 million on school milk.

Mr. Thomas: In view of that figure, does the Secretary of State acknowledge the vital contribution made by public expenditure to the Welsh rural economy? Will he give us an assurance that there will be no further attempt to reduce jobs or opportunities for farmers to obtain advice through the advisory services as a result of his Department's privatisation proposals?

Mr. Edwards: My Department's estimated provision for expenditure in support of agriculture in Wales in 1985-86 is £82·7 million. That is a substantial sum. The Welsh Office's share of changes over previous plans for agricultural support for 1986-87 involves a net reduction of about £4 million over the previous year. That reduction mainly reflects revised forecasts of future demand-determined expenditure on grants for capital and other improvements. We have announced that we are making some savings in ADAS and charging for some of its services. I can confirm that there will continue to be provision for a substantial level of advice from ADAS.

Mr. John: When does the Secretary of State expect that the help to compensate for the wet summer will be available? The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced to the Conservative party conference that it was to be finalised by the end of October. October has come and gone, and no aid is forthcoming.

Mr. Edwards: Discussions are going on at the moment. I well understand the need to arrive at early decisions. It is not entirely a straightforward matter to arrive at a scheme that directs help to those people and areas that most need it, because, as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the damage and consequences vary substantially. In some places they are horrendous, while in neighbouring areas the effects have been much less. They are not entirely straightforward matters. We are considering them urgently. I hope that it will not be long before we can make an announcement.

Mr. Raffan: Will my hon. Friend assure sheep farmers in my constituency that the Government will resolutely oppose the EC Commission's surrender to French protectionism by its iniquitous proposal for a claw-back on exported ewes.

Mr. Edwards: As my hon. Friend will be aware, we registered our objections formally. We voted against the European Commission's proposal about a week or 10 days ago. We continue to oppose the alternative proposals. The position is somewhat uncertain at the moment because the original scheme has come to an end and no new scheme has yet formally taken its place. I fully understand the importance of that matter, and the Government will continue to take a resolute stand on it.

Development Board for Rural Wales

9. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to give extra financial aid to the Development Board for Rural Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We are currently considering the board's funding as part of this year's review of public expenditure.

Mr. Carlile: Does the Minister recognise that whatever direct aid is given to Mid Wales Development there is a crying need for greater indirect aid in the form of the rapid development of the east-west road link? Does he accept that there is great dissatisfaction in mid Wales about the lethargy being shown by the Welsh Office in producing that road link?

Mr. Roberts: I am glad that I detected that the hon. and learned Gentleman approves of the budgeting of the development board so far. It has done well this year by having £10·3 million to spend, which is £600,000 more than last year. With regard to roads, yes, representations have been made to me about those roads by the chairman as late as last Friday, and we shall, of course, consider them in our roads programme.

Sporting and Recreational Facilities

10. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the Sports Council in Wales about the availability of sporting and recreational facilities within easy travelling distance of every community in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I discussed the development of sport in Wales generally with the chairman of the Sports Council for Wales on 30 October.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that there is a disgraceful position in the Dwyfor area? There is not one indoor swimming pool or sports centre open to the public in that district. That area has been identified by the Sports Council as the most deprived in Wales in that respect. Will he give an undertaking that when considering the capital allowances for local authorities for the coming year, sympathy will be shown to an application to remedy that weakness?

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Gentleman has already written to me on this subject. The application by the Dwyfor district council for a special capital allocation to build a leisure centre at Pwllheli is still under consideration. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that his representations will be taken into account, but I must point out that we have received numerous other applications as well.

Mr. Foot: Does the hon. Gentleman not understand that, following the Bradford disaster, many small football and rugby clubs are having to spend considerable sums of money to make their grounds safe? Is it not right that the Welsh Office, perhaps through the Sports Council, should assist those clubs? Without such help, many of these clubs will be driven out of existence, with the consequences that all of us can imagine.

Mr. Robinson: The right hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that clubs are being asked to undertake improvements to their grounds to make them safe. The Government do not accept that there is a case for Government assistance for this aspect of sport.

Mr. Grist: Is my hon. Friend aware of the great need for indoor tennis facilities in Cardiff city? Will his Department give every assistance towards providing these facilities, which are urgently needed in the United Kingdom generally?

Mr. Robinson: I take note of what my hon. Friend has said about indoor tennis courts. I am sure that representations about this matter have also been made to the Sports Council for Wales.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

County Palatine (Visit)

22. **Mr. Silvester** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he will next visit the county palatine.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. Norman Tebbit): On 29 and 30 November next, when I visit Manchester and Blackpool.

Mr. Silvester: When my right hon. Friend goes to the county palatine, will he make sure that he draws attention to the suffering that is now being imposed on some of the residents of the palatinate as a result of the cruel activities of Liverpool city council?

Mr. Tebbit: It is quite likely that on my next visit, or even before it, I may comment upon the follies of those who have been actively destroying the city of Liverpool by their activities on the city council. No doubt I shall be able to quote from the words of the Leader of the Opposition and the many leaders of trade unions who have condemned extreme Left wingers in the Labour party in Liverpool.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: At the same time, will the right hon. Gentleman look at the whole of the county of Greater Manchester and take note of the fact that over the past six years unemployment there has increased from around 5 per cent. to something nearer 14 per cent.? That matter greatly concerns the residents of the area.

Mr. Tebbit: I understand that concern. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, Her Majesty's Government have been active in many ways in seeking to combat the problems, of unemployment. As he knows, the average level of unemployment has risen under every Government since the end of the war. These are deep-rooted problems and I know that he, like me, will take some comfort from the fact that at the moment this country is generating more new jobs than the rest of Europe put together.

Duties

23. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on his duties as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Tebbit: My duties are such that I have overall responsibility for the work of the Duchy of Lancaster Office.

Mr. Winnick: That tells us a lot. Is it not also part of the right hon. Gentleman's duty to try to ensure that the deputy chairman of the Tory party does not keep putting his foot into his mouth? The right hon. Gentleman in particular is always talking about other organisations being democratic. Can he explain why there are no elections for the position of party chairman? Why is the appointment subject to only one person's choice?

Mr. Tebbit: If providence had not pre-empted him, the hon. Gentleman would be in danger of making a fool of himself. The fact of the matter is that my duties as chairman of the Conservative party, for which I emphasise I do not answer in this House, are entirely similar to those of the general secretary of the Labour Party, Mr. Whitty, who is not elected to his post, either.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Bishop of Durham (Palace)

24. **Mr. Greenway** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, how much the Church Commissioners have spent on *(a)* dilapidations and *(b)* other works at the palace of the Bishop of Durham in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners (Sir William van Straubenzee): As the answer contains a number of figures I will, with permission, circulate them in the *Official Report*. However, total expenditure by the Church Commissioners over the last 10 years was £816,000.

Mr. Greenway: Can my hon. Friend say whether that is the truthful expenditure on the palace of the Bishop of Durham, or whether other money is being spent, and if so, from what sources, and why it is being spent? Is it not possible for the Bishop of Durham to live in more modest surroundings, instead of at such enormous cost?

Sir William van Straubenzee: Of the total of about £940,000 which has been spent on the chapel at Auckland castle, about £320,000 was met by grants from the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. Auckland castle is a great ancient and historic house, and I understand that there are very strong feelings in the diocese that the bishop of the diocese should continue to reside there. It is illustrative of the great burdens on the Church. For example, we have had to provide £6,300 for the replacement of beetle-infested timbers. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not want the bishop to be infested with beetles.

Mr. Cormack: Is my hon. Friend aware that most people who care about these matters will be glad that the money is being spent? I remind him that Auckland castle is far more important than any of its temporary inhabitants, and far more inspirational than any of them.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I listen carefully to what my hon. Friend, with his special skills in this matter, tells me, but he will join me in reminding ourselves that this is money that could otherwise be spent on stipends and other matters, and is part of the very expensive heritage of buildings of the Church of England.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will my hon. Friend consider hiring a reliable medium to take advice from the late Bishop Hatto about how the inhabitants of the building should be entertained and preserved?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I should be very grateful if my hon. Friend would volunteer for that task. *Following are the figures:*

Expenditure on dilapidations and other works by the Church Commissioners on the Bishop of Durham's official house (Auckland castle) over the last 10 years has been as follows:

	Dilapidations	*Other works*	*Total*
	£	£	£
Year to 31.03.76	4,348	125	4,473
Year to 31.03.77	6,493	27	6,520
Year to 30.03.78	24,009	8,520	32,529
Year to 31.03.79	57,325	55	57,380
Nine months to 31.12.79	42,534	1,243	43,777
Year to 31.12.80	118,510	3,941	122,451
Year to 31.12.81	131,581	13,967	145,548
Year to 31.12.82	269,264	20,095	289,359
Year to 31.12.83	17,456	13,730	31,186
Year to 31.12.84	53,325	29,750	83,075
	724,845	91,453	816,298

(As a result of the commissioners changing their financial year, the period to 31.12.79 covers only nine months).

Employees (Hours of Work)

25. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what are the normal hours of work of employees of the Church Commissioners; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: Forty-one per week, including lunch breaks.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am not surprised that the Church Commissioners are working from Monday to Friday and doing only 41 hours, and I am relieved that they do not yet have to work on Sundays. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a double standard in operation when the Church Commissioners' assets committee invests £240 million in new shopping centres in Glasgow, Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich and other areas, and supports several leading shopping chains, such as Mothercare and Habitat, which want to open on Sundays? Should not my hon. Friend, through the Church Commissioners, be encouraging them to stay shut on Sunday, the day of rest?

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners as such have not made any pronouncement on the matter, partly because they wanted to wait and see the terms of any Bill. However, my hon. Friend must not assume that they will necessarily continue to remain silent.

WALES

South Glamorgan Health Authority

11. **Mr. Gwilym Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the provisional allocations for spending by South Glamorgan health authority in 1984-85 and 1985-86; on what dates those allocations were advised

to the health authority; and what extra moneys have been found for the health authority in each of these financial years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The provisional allocations notified to the South Glamorgan health authority in 1984-85 and 1985-86 were £119·4 million and £128·5 million. The revenue and capital elements of these allocations were notified on 10 February and 27 February in 1984 and 25 February and 26 March in 1985. Additional funds totalling £6·3 million were provided during 1984-85, and an additional £0·2 million has been provided in 1985-86. A further £1·27 million of provision for specific developments will be released to the authority when required.

Mr. Jones: We are all appreciative of the real increase in expenditure on the National Health Service achieved by my hon. Friend and his colleagues, particularly the extra moneys that have been found during the financial year. What staff of South Glamorgan health authority has he instructed should be axed?

Mr. Robinson: My hon. Friend is right. There has been a 21·25 per cent. increase in the funding of health authorities in Wales since 1979. It is not my right hon. Friend's policy to instruct health authorities to reduce the number of staff. It is for them to decide how to use their allocations.

THE ARTS

Northern Arts

27. **Mr. Beith** asked the Minister for the Arts what recent representations he has received from Northern Arts about the impact of the abolition of Tyne and Wear county council on arts spending in the region; and what response he has given.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I have received a number of representations, and I visited Tyne and Wear on 11 November. As I announced in the House on 14 November, the Government will make £25 million available to the Arts Council next year, towards the replacement of arts funding in the abolition areas. It will now be for the Arts Council to decide its regional allocations and for successor authorities to play their part.

Mr. Beith: During his visit to the region last week, did the Minister notice the unique arrangement which means that a large proportion of arts expenditure is funded by Tyne and Wear county council rather than by the districts? Does he think that the excessively London-minded Arts Council has grasped the significance of that in regard to the use of the money that he announced on Thursday? Is he aware that that and the small increase in the base rate of grant will result in rural areas such as Northumberland being left behind when it comes to arts grants while the region tries to sort out the problems created by the abolition of Tyne and Wear?

Mr. Luce: I had useful discussions in Newcastle last week with Tyne and Wear county council and the successor authorities. I am aware of the distribution of money between various authorities and I am satisfied that the Arts Council will take the factors that the hon. Gentleman mentioned fully into account when disbursing the additional money. As for rural areas, I have announced an increase in the amount of money available for regional development. It will make an important contribution.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Can my hon. Friend extend that assurance to metropolitan county areas generally? I have the west midlands in mind.

Mr. Luce: Yes, I can. It is up to the Arts Council to decide how to disburse the money. I am sure that it will take each region's needs into account.

Mr. Ryman: Can the Minister confirm from his visit to the north-east last week that the whole region utterly opposes the Government's asinine policy of abolishing the county of Tyne and Wear and the resulting chaos?

Mr. Luce: The purpose of my visit was to have constructive discussions—which I had—with Tyne and Wear county council and the successor authorities about how they can play their part in financing the arts, in addition to the Government's role. I thought that the successor authorities demonstrated a positive approach.

Victoria and Albert Museum

28. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement about the voluntary system of charges introduced by the Victoria and Albert museum.

33. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement about the introduction of the voluntary entrance fee at the Victoria and Albert museum.

Mr. Luce: Charges are a matter for the trustees' discretion. The trustees of the Victoria and Albert museum have decided to introduce a voluntary donations scheme at the museum and to suggest a donation of £2 per adult and 50p for students and old-age pensioners. The donations will accrue to the Associates of the V and A, an independent fund-raising body, which will use them to support museum ventures not met from the moneys voted by this House.

Mr. Baker: Will my hon. Friend also congratulate Sir Roy Strong and the trustees on devising this popular and sensible means of subsidising the arts? What will he do to encourage other museums to do the same and to retain more of the receipts from charges?

Mr. Luce: It is entirely up to the trustees of national museums to decide what methods they use to provide additional funds. The Government provide basic funding for national museums and will continue to do so, but we should do everything to encourage them to raise extra money by other means to improve services. I would encourage any method of raising extra revenue. Indeed, I am considering methods of improving the system.

Mr. Chapman: While I also commend the initiative taken by the Victoria and Albert museum, and point out that there is a world of difference between its scheme and compulsory charges for our national museums, may I ask whether my hon. Friend agrees that the person who led the publicity campaign against it on television and who said that his taxes had paid for the V and A only showed that his sense of history was as poor as his misplaced histrionics on television?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend. The trustees have discretion and can either raise voluntary donations or

impose admission charges, as the National Maritime museum does. It is at their discretion. I agree with my hon. Friend that almost every other country with a national museum makes charges, and it seems extraordinary that people should discourage the efforts of those who are trying to increase their available resources.

Mr. Tony Banks: We should be proud of our policy of free admission to museums. Does the Minister not realise that these voluntary charges are a form of moral blackmail, and will undoubtedly deter many people from visiting museums? Will he keep a careful check on attendances at the V and A, and, if they fall off, will he dissuade other museums from carrying out a similar policy?

Mr. Luce: I shall not. It is up to the trustees and governing bodies of local museums to decide how they secure extra revenue in addition to the basic funding from the Government. When one considers the range of places that are chargeable, for example, visiting a country house, it is extraordinary that the hon. Gentleman should say that it is immoral to experiment in this way.

Mr. Buchan: Does the Minister accept that his comments on the freedom of trustees might be listened to with more care if it were not for the fact that in 1973 and 1974 the present Prime Minister compelled them to introduce charges, the consequence of which was a 50 per cent. decrease in attendances at the V and A during the three months following their introduction? We persuaded the museums to drop those charges, and we shall rescind these charges next time. These are national institutions and they cannot be left to make such decisions, which will result in an immediate fall in attendances. Any extra money will be clawed back.

Mr. Luce: It is regrettable that the hon. Gentleman should suggest that if ever he had the chance to be in office he would look to ways of discouraging museums from raising extra revenue. If museums wish to do so, why should they not have the freedom to improve their services?

Business Support

29. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has to simplify and improve the incentives to businesses to support the arts.

Mr. Luce: The Government have already made a number of tax improvements designed to make it more attractive to give to the arts, thus honouring the commitments in our manifesto. In addition, the business sponsorship incentive scheme has generated an extra £5·5 million in its first year.

Mr. Howarth: Will my hon. Friend seek to impress on his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer the fact that the complication and uncertainty of the present tax rules discourage many potential sponsors, and that it would be better if we simply allowed businesses that wished to support the arts to set off donations up to a certain percentage of pre-tax profits, as other countries do?

Mr. Luce: I note what my hon. Friend says, and I shall convey his views to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. My hon. Friend will acknowledge that during our time in office we have undertaken many moves to encourage businesses to sponsor the arts, ranging from a reduction in the covenanting period to relief from capital transfer tax on all gifts to charities. That is an encouragement to sponsorship. I am anxious to find any way that will enhance further the amount of support from the public and from businesses for the arts.

Mr. Freud: While the Minister has the gratitude of the House, and particularly the people of East Anglia, for his continued support of the business sponsorship scheme, may I ask whether he accepts that opera houses cannot function on an annual basis, and, in order to plan ahead, desperately need endowments?

Mr. Luce: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, and I am grateful for his support of the business sponsorship scheme. I am glad that his wife has benefited from it, and rightly so. The scheme provides support for many regions; not only East Anglia, but all parts. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about opera houses. In addition to any basic grants from the Government, opera houses should be encouraged to find ways of securing extra outside private support.

Regional Facilities

30. **Mr. Pike** asked the Minister for the Arts if he is satisfied that sufficient resources are being made available for the extensions of facilities for the arts in the regions.

Mr. Luce: It is for the Arts Council to allocate its funds, taking due account of the needs of arts bodies, and the contribution of local authorities. I have every confidence in the council's regional development strategy as set out in "The Glory of the Garden", and the grant for 1986-87 which I announced on 14 November will enable it to continue. The £3 million development money allocated by the council in the current year has, I am pleased to say, already generated more than £2 million additional local funding.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister support councils such as Burnley borough council, which is converting the Mechanics building in Burnley to a theatre and a multi-purpose arts centre? Will he give that council financial support? Is he aware that it seems that present Government policy will penalise Burnley once it has converted the building and has to meet the revenue costs?

Mr. Luce: I know of the hon. Gentleman's keen interest in the Burnley Mechanics Institute Theatre project, but, as he knows, it is now Arts Council policy not to support capital expenditure of the kind that he has described. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will look not just to local authorities, but to private sponsorship as well, to help in this connection.

Mr. Ray Powell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of questions?

Mr. Powell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Given the importance of my question No. 5 and the indequate reply from the Secretary of State, I should like to give notice that I intend to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the meeting which I attended with the Taoiseach on 15 November. I was accompanied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Dr. FitzGerald was accompanied by Mr. Spring, the Tanaiste, and by Mr. Barry, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

An agreement was signed between our two Governments, which has been published in a Command Paper. The text of the communique, issued after the meeting, is also included in the Command Paper.

The purpose of the agreement is to promote peace and stability in Northern Ireland; to encourage reconciliation between the two communities there; to create an improved climate of friendship and co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland; and to strengthen cross-border co-operation between the two countries, particularly in combating terrorism.

The agreement will not come into force until it has been approved by Parliament and by the Irish Dail. The House will have an early opportunity for a full debate.

The agreement has two principal features. The Irish Government have affirmed in a binding international agreement that the status of Northern Ireland will remain unchanged so long as that is the wish of the majority of its people. They have also recognised that the present wish of a majority is to remain part of the United Kingdom. This is the most formal commitment to the principle of consent made by any Irish Government.

The second main feature of the agreement is the establishment of an intergovernmental conference within the framework of the existing Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council. The conference will be serviced by a secretariat on a continuing basis. In this conference the Irish Government may put forward views and proposals on certain aspects of Northern Ireland affairs.

If devolution is restored — both Governments are committed to support this — then those matters which become the responsibility of the devolved Government will be taken out of the hands of the intergovernmental conference. The conference will also discuss cross-border co-operation, including improved security co-operation.

The two Governments have agreed to make determined efforts to resolve any differences that may arise, but the conference will not be a decision-making body. Full responsibility for the decisions and administration of government will remain with the United Kingdom Government north of the border and with the Irish Government south of the border.

The first meeting of the intergovernmental conference will take place as soon as practicable after the agreement enters into force. Particular subjects on which the conference will concentrate at its initial meetings are: ways of improving relations between the security forces and the minority community in Northern Ireland; action to improve security co-operation between our two Governments; ways to help to underline the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice.

The agreement recognises that it would be for parliamentary decision in Westminster and Dublin whether to establish an Anglo-Irish parliamentary body of the kind described in the Anglo-Irish studies report of November 1981.

The Irish Government have announced in the communiqué their intention to accede as soon as possible to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. We welcome this.

No single agreement can resolve the deep-rooted and complex problems of Northern Ireland and deliver the peace for which the great majority of people in Northern Ireland long, but I believe that the present agreement will make an important contribution. It maintains and confirms the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom and recognises the legitimacy of the Unionist position. It provides for co-operation in the intergovernmental conference to be a two-way street.

We shall wish to pursue matters affecting the Republic in the interests of the people of Northern Ireland — for instance, improved security and economic co-operation. It encourages the political parties in Northern Ireland to reach agreement on an acceptable form of devolved government. It offers hope to all those in both communities who want to defeat the men of violence and to work together peacefully for a better future for their children. That is the purpose of the agreement. It is in that spirit that I commend it to the House.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): May I first express the Opposition's hope that the Anglo-Irish summit succeeds in its intention of promoting peace and stability in Northern Ireland? We wish the initiative well.

Is the Prime Minister aware that we regard two of the principles on which the agreement is based as especially important? These are, first, the reassertion by the Dublin Government of their acceptance that a change in Northern Ireland status could not come about without the consent of the people of Northern Ireland, and, secondly, the acknowledgement by the British Government of what was described in a previous summit as the all-Irish dimension.

Against that background of general welcome, I ask the Prime Minister four specific questions. The right hon. Lady said that the intergovernmental conference may put forward views and proposals on certain aspects of Northern Ireland affairs. What are the subjects which have been agreed as unsuitable for discussion by that body? Secondly, is the intergovernmental conference to discuss plans for possible devolution before the Government consider putting them to the House, or is that essentially constitutional issue regarded as the prerogative solely of the United Kingdom?

Thirdly, there have been many reports since Friday of the United States proposing or offering governmental assistance to Northern Ireland. [Hon. Members: "Bribe."] May we be told what the facts are on these matters? Fourthly, the newspapers since Friday have referred constantly to promises by the United States Government to provide various forms of grant for use in Northern Ireland. Are these promises fact? If so, what form will the grants take?

Fifthly, I gladly acknowledge that the Ulster Defence Regiment was created as a non-sectarian force to inspire the confidence of all Northern Ireland, but sadly that is no

longer the position. Have any decisions been taken, or assurances given, about the future role and the entire operation of the UDR?

Finally, no one suggests that the agreement is without its faults — no such agreement could be — but, in our view, it offers some hope for the people of Northern Ireland; it is for that reason that we wish it well.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his general approach and for the good wishes that he has expressed to the purposes behind the agreement. The right hon. Gentleman asked four questions. First, he asked what subjects were regarded as not suitable for the conference. The subjects that are regarded as suitable are set out in the agreement itself. They are clear. Article 2 says that the conference shall

"deal . . . on a regular basis with . . . political matters . . . security and related matters . . . legal matters, including the administration of justice . . . the promotion of cross-border co-operation"

and certain other matters such as economic and cultural matters referred to in the agreement. The subjects that are suitable are set out in the agreement rather than the subjects which are not suitable.

The right hon. Gentleman's second question referred to decisions relating to devolved government. It is of course for the United Kingdom to approach the constitutional parties about devolved government. It is for the Republic of Ireland to put forward views in the conference about that matter. However, decisions north of the border rest with the United Kingdom Government.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned promises and grants from the United States. It has been suggested that the United States should provide moneys to assist both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. I do not know any more than has been published.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (Down, South): Oh!

The Prime Minister: We believe that some money will be forthcoming, but I do not know the amount or in what form it will be.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the Ulster Defence Regiment. I congratulate the Ulster Defence Regiment upon its most excellent record. There are no changes in its structure. The matter to which the right hon. Gentleman referred is dealt with in paragraph 8 of the communiqué, which states:

"In addressing the improvement of relations between the security forces and the minority community, the Conference at its first meeting will consider

(a) the application of the principle that the Armed Forces (which include the Ulster Defence Regiment) operate only in support of the civil power, with the particular objective of ensuring as rapidly as possible that, save in the most exceptional circumstances, there is a police presence in all operations which involve direct contact with the community."

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Can my right hon. Friend, who has proclaimed herself rock firm for the Union and reaffirmed her Unionism at Hillsborough castle, assure the House that the agreement, whether in terms of is wording or in fact, gives Dublin no veto in the exercise of executive authority in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: That is correct. Decisions north of the border are for the United Kingdom. Decisions south of the border are for the Republic. The Republic has no veto in decisions north of the border.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Is the Prime Minister aware that instructions have been given for leave to be sought forthwith to apply for the judicial review of a number of the issues which the agreement raises? I understand that the initial steps in court are likely to take place within the next 48 hours. I look to the Government not to proceed with any action in implementation of the agreement until their legal right to do so is clarified.

The Prime Minister: I do not think that I can give the right hon. Gentleman the answer which he seeks off the cuff. I believe that we are right to go ahead with debating the agreement next week and putting forward a motion that the agreement has the approval of the House. That is our intention.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Will the Prime Minister agree that, while it is always easier to destroy than to create, nowhere is that more true than in the history of Northern Ireland? Will she accept from these Benches support on the basis that this creative step is preferable to the status quo of bitterness, division and bloodshed? Will she further agree that those who are not prepared to accept the decisions of this sovereign Parliament, as they apply to that part of the United Kingdom, should cease to arrogate unto themselves the title of moralist?

The Prime Minister: I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's constructive approach in support of the agreement. It is designed to mobilise men and women of good will everywhere against the men of violence so that there may be peace and stability in Northern Ireland, against a background where the Republic of Ireland recognises the legitimacy of the Unionist case and the fact that the status of Northern Ireland cannot be changed without consent.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): It will come as no surprise to the right hon. Lady to hear that I shall not be commending this document of treachery and deceit to the House. As the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic arrived home from Hillsborough castle it was widely publicised on television, radio and in the press that he said:

"In future, the Ulster Defence Regiment will operate differently from the way in which it has operated for the last 12 years. That means that from now on the present position under which the Ulster Defence Regiment can stop people on the road, search them and question them will no longer operate."

He also said something which affects the sovereignty of this House over a regiment of the British army:

"The question of how security should be organised in Northern Ireland is one for the new intergovernmental conference."

In view of the fact that the people who live on the border in Northern Ireland get no defence from anybody but the Ulster Defence Regiment, what will they do in these circumstances, and why should a Prime Minister of a foreign republic have a say in the government and direction of a British Army regiment?

The Prime Minister: I pay tribute once again to the bravery and courage of the men and women of the Ulster Defence Regiment. I repeat that under the agreement the Governments of both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland may raise with one another matters of security: we with them about certain matters south of the border and they with us about matters north of the border. Decisions north of the border will remain with the United Kingdom. Decisions south of the border will remain with the Republic. For many years, the policy of Her Majesty's

[The Prime Minister]

Government has been that the armed forces should operate in aid of the civil power. We have been trying to make arrangements progressively to bring that into effect. The only difference about the Ulster Defence Regiment relates not to the agreement itself but to the particular matter which I read out from the communiqúe. It says that the conference will consider the objective of ensuring

"as rapidly as possible that, save in the most exceptional circumstances, there is a police presence in all operations which involve direct contact with the community."

That is in pursuance of the general policy that in a democracy the armed forces act in aid of the civil power.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Does the Prime Minister agree that a great deal will depend upon the implementation of the agreement? Can she assure the House that it will be implemented in the same spirit of good faith as was evident on Friday between the two Prime Ministers? Despite the ill-judged and prejudged reaction from certain quarters, my party believes that this agreement is an opportunity to make progress towards peace and reconciliation. We shall offer our fullest co-operation to the new institution. That includes willingness to enter into discussion and dialogue with anybody in Northern Ireland, particularly those who represent Northern Ireland, in this House, about any matter that will lead to peace and reconciliation, including the sharing of responsibility for certain matters in Northern Ireland. Recognition of the validity of both traditions, which was explicit in this agreement, is the only true basis for reconciliation. My party and those who support me do not believe that there will be any resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland which involves in any way the crushing or the defeat of the Protestant heritage there. Not only would that be unthinkable; it would be impossible.

The Prime Minister: May I most warmly thank the hon. Gentleman for what he has said? I believe that his constructive contribution will help greatly to defeat the men of violence and to bring peace and stability to both traditions in Northern Ireland. Whenever there is a change, obviously hopes and fears are raised on both sides. It is for us in this House and those who take the lead in all communities in Northern Ireland to quell those fears and to bring forward those hopes so that we may move forward to the peace and stability that we all want.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in these coming months, and whatever view we take about the Anglo-Irish agreement, restraint in public utterance will assist, and intemperate and inflammatory public utterance will injure the true cause of Ulster?

Is my right hon. Friend further aware that charges of treachery levelled against her, whether within or without this House, are resented deeply by me and will be repudiated totally by me?

The Prime Minister: I warmly agree with my hon. Friend about restraint in public utterance. His objectives for peace and stability and for defeating the men of violence are the same as mine. I am very grateful to him for what he said in the latter part of his question.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): No one who has had any responsibility for Ulster—for Northern Ireland—could do aught else than wish the Government well in their endeavours. I was especially pleased to hear the words of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume).

Is the right hon. Lady aware that I regret the reports in the weekend newspapers that, in the light of the response of the Unionists, there is talk of sending 9,000 soldiers and two battalions of paras — [AN HON. MEMBER: "Rubbish."] I am referring to what has been reported.

I have noted that, unlike in 1974, the Unionists on these Benches have not had any truck with paramilitaries and are not talking about an Ulster workers' strike. They are talking about standing again for election and of going to the High Court. At least in the short run, we should give them credit for that. We must fight their arguments, if that is necessary, with the spoken word and not with threats, because that would be counter-productive to Northern Ireland.

The crisis is likely to come next year. If the Ulster Unionists win through overwhelmingly in their communities, the Orange card will no longer be able to be played over here—the Orange card will no longer be a trump card. I simply say to the Government that it is about that time that they should be thinking, because it is my view that the union is at risk not from this part of the United Kingdom but from within Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for raising the matter of that report. I know of no such plans as those referred to in that report, and we have issued a statement from No. 10 Downing street to that effect. I do not see any need to increase the security forces in Northern Ireland as a result of the agreement. I hope that any views that are to be put will be put in the customary way, through representatives in this House or through representatives in the Assembly or elsewhere in Northern Ireland. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to make that clear.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Should not those who are most vocal in their wish that Northern Ireland should remain part of the United Kingdom bear in mind the fact that it follows logically from their position that the acceptability of this agreement is a matter for the United Kingdom as a whole, and that the United Kingdom will warmly applaud the agreement and wish it success?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my right hon. Friend is correct. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and will remain so unless the majority wish the contrary and the House endorses their wish. Decisions are a matter for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On behalf of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I join in expressing the hope that this agreement assists the process of peace and security. Is it the Prime Minister's intention to table a motion and allow a free vote on the proposal that there should be an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the first part of his question. There will be a motion, subject to the approval of my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal. We hope to have a debate next week and we shall table a motion to approve the agreement. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the answer that he wishes to receive on the voting. The parliamentary tier is a matter for the House and for the Dail.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, while the prospect of additional American investment in Northern Ireland could be useful, provided that it is properly targeted, by far the best hope for the security and prosperity of Ulster and for its marvellously skilled work force would be if efforts could be mounted to ensure that the agreement is built upon and not undermined and eroded by pointless unrest?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my right hon. Friend. I understand that it is the intention of the United States of America to put up some money to help peace and stability in Northern Ireland and for inward investment. I do not know how much or what form it would take, but it would be tragic if there were to be internal unrest, because that would put back the cause of peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Is the right hon. Lady aware that the prime challenge to this agreement may not arise from the customary threat, nor even from great expectations about improved security, but from the response of the indigenous nationalist community? Is she further aware that, if the agreement does not provide some evidence or even offer a glimpse of a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of Northern Ireland, and of movement towards its legitimate unity aspirations, the right hon. Lady will not achieve her principal objective of defeating Sinn Fein, whatever role she accords Dublin?

The Prime Minister: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The agreement refers to the possibility of devolved government on a basis acceptable to both communities. If that could be provided, the matters that are within the scope of the intergovernmental conference would leave the scope of the conference and be dealt with by devolved Government. That offers some hope, and the fact that we are mobilising all people who are against violence to fight it offers hope to all the people of Northern Ireland. I hope that one day we may even get the hon. Gentleman to come round more to our view.

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many people who may feel uneasy about some aspects of this agreement would have felt very much more uneasy if my right hon. Friend had not succeeded in reaching this agreement?

The Prime Minister: I recognise that not everyone can agree with every part of the agreement, but most people support its general purpose and wish it well.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Will the Prime Minister be completely candid with the House and the public about what is contemplated in the context of the administration of justice, especially in view of the discussions that have taken place on the operation of mixed courts in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: The agreement shows that we have agreed in good faith to consider the possibility of mixed courts. We are considering that possibility without commitment, because we know from experience the difficulties and we cannot yet see our way around them. We are considering the possibility without commitment.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): My right hon. Friend has consistently argued that, despite the Republic's claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland, it has no right to intervene in the domestic affairs of this kingdom. Now, she proposes to give it a legally enforceable right to do so — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] — in clear breach of the spirit, if not the letter, of the constitutional guarantee to Northern Ireland. Why has my right hon. Friend abandoned her Unionist principles?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend is aware, I have not. The intergovernmental conference is about the Republic putting forward its proposals and views within the context of that conference. Article 2 makes it clear that

> "There is no derogation from the sovereignty of either the United Kingdom Government or the Irish Government, and each retains responsibility for the decisions and administration of Government within its own jurisdiction."

Thus, the undertaking I gave after the Chequers conference that there would not be a united Ireland, joint sovereignty or joint authority has been fully honoured and upheld.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Will the Prime Minister accept that on Merseyside, in Liverpool and in my constituency of Bootle, where I represent second, third and fourth generation Irish people, sectarian conflicts and violence have been removed and conquered? Conflict existed in full force as a reflection of what happened in Ireland many years ago, but it has now been killed. That was achieved because the Catholic minority on Merseyside did not face an Ulster Defence Regiment or a police force that is seen to be sectarian. It was achieved because the Catholics of Liverpool and Bootle had the same civil liberties as the Protestant majority——

Sir John Biggs-Davison: And the same Parliament.

Mr. Roberts: Yes, and the same Parliament.

It was achieved because a climate of good will and tolerance was created in the Orange and Catholic communities. Although the Irish people whom I represent do not want a return to sectarian conflict in Merseyside, they believe that the problems of Northern Ireland will not be solved until Ireland is unified.

The Prime Minister: The latter part of what the hon. Gentleman said is not helpful in any way. It will only arouse fears in people who are the majority in Northern Ireland—fears which do not arise from the agreement. For the first time, the Republic has recognised the legitimacy of the Unionist cause and the fact that Northern Ireland shall retain its present status because the majority wishes that to be so, and that that will be the case until the majority changes. Obviously, we must work with both communities. The hon. Gentleman will recall that the Unionist document "The Way Forward" recognises some of the hopes and fears of both communities. It states:

> "It is the responsibility of the majority to persuade the minority that the Province is also theirs."

Mr. Adam Butler (Bosworth): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the most welcome part of her statement is the reference to the priority which the conference will give to co-operation in security matters? Achievement in that area is the best way to gain support from both communities for the work of the conference. Does my right hon. Friend agree that no one should assume that the agreement is a preliminary to a united Ireland and that the conference and the Government should have an open mind to the many possible solutions? Would my right hon. Friend confirm that a united Ireland is not the aim of her Government?

The Prime Minister: Most certainly. Article 1 of the agreement states:

"The two Governments

(a) affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

That has been signed by both Governments. The agreement should add to the confidence of Northen Ireland Unionists.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): If the Irish Republic is a friendly state, why was it necessary for the Government to sell out on the sovereignty of Northern Ireland to obtain co-operation against terrorism? Should not co-operation against terrorism be given as of right by any friendly neighbour?

The Prime Minister: We hope that the agreement will enhance co-operation against terrorism by mobilising from the nationalist community in Northern Ireland the support of all those who are against violence, and that cross-border support will be enhanced through the increased co-operation that the agreement affords. That would be to the advantage of all the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): To what extent is the Prime Minister's word her bond? Does she recall that in November 1984 she signed a communiqúe with the same viper that she took to her breast in Hillsborough castle? In that communiqúe, she promised that any political structures or processes affecting Northern Ireland would have to be acceptable to both sections of the community. What test of acceptability does the Prime Minister intend to use? Has she the least appreciation of the deep sense of betrayal felt by the people of Northern Ireland at this act of political prostitution?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is deliberately trying to work up fears when he should be doing everything to allay them if he really wished to defeat the violence that afflicts Northern Ireland. The acceptability to which he referred related to devolved government, which would have to be broadly acceptable to both sides of the community. That would be a matter for the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland after discussions with the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland. After what the hon. Gentleman has rather scandalously said—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]—I must repeat the agreement:

"The two Governments

(a) affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland;

(b) recognise that the present wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland is for no change in the status of Northern Ireland."

That is the best guarantee from the Republic that the people of Northern Ireland have ever had.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Does the right hon. Lady accept that there is a difference between treachery and treason? Does she accept that, since it is absolutely necessary to arrive at a reasonable solution to the problems of Northern Ireland, no method of arriving at the solution should be neglected, including assistance arising from our special relationship with the Americans?

The Prime Minister: I understand that it is the wish of the United States Administration to give some help. I do not know how much or what form it would take. We gladly accept their good wishes and we are grateful for the way in which they have tried to stop any help going to Noraid, because that would go to the men of violence. We gladly accept their help.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): I warmly commend the Government for this initiative, which offers something to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland, except the extremists and the men of violence. Will my right hon. Friend say a little more about article 12, which deals with inter-parliamentary relations? If there are to be regular formal meetings between Ministers, is there anything that those outside the two Governments might offer in a more formal structure than we have? My right hon. Friend says that she would accede to the wishes of Parliament in this. How does she think that those wishes might be made manifest?

The Prime Minister: Whether there should be an inter-parliamentary arrangement is a matter for both Parliaments. If a wish is expressed, through the usual channels or through my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, for such an arrangement, we, the Government, would support it.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is the Prime Minister aware that all those Protestants who have in the past been in favour of a united Ireland have not actually adhered to the Orange banner—I refer, for example, to people such as Robert Emmet, Lord Edward Fitzgerald and Wolfe Tone—and that there is another tradition, a Protestant tradition, in Ireland that believes that Ireland has a right to a united country? Having said that, is the right hon. Lady aware that, while many of us want this to be a success, we have reservations because we are concerned that there may be not only a Protestant backlash but, equally, a backlash from people who fear, even at this stage, that they are not getting a proper deal in relation to this agreement?

The Prime Minister: The agreement recognises that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland except with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. Anyone who is trying to undermine that is only trying to raise fears which do not exist. This is the first time that we have had a recognition of that in writing from the Republic of Ireland, and that is valuable in calming the fears of the Unionists and reassuring them that change would come about only by the will of the majority in Northern Ireland.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): While I warmly congratulate Her Majesty's Government on the agreement, is it not a fact that one party to the agreement always seems to be left out of account, and that is the British people as a whole? They will not take kindly to people who seek to frustrate the will of this Parliament yet who call themselves loyalists.

The Prime Minister: Everyone in Northern Ireland who detests violence has a duty to try to make the agreement work, in loyalty to and recognition of those who regularly risk their lives in defending our freedom in the Province.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the Prime Minister agree that, despite the drama of recent days, there is nothing very much in the agreement that takes us beyond the status quo, apart from formalising the links that exist between Dublin and London? Despite that, we have seen an intransigent and unreasonable outburst

from the Unionist parties in Northern Ireland. Does the right hon. Lady feel that the time has come for the British Government to take more heed of the views of the people of Britain and all the people of Ireland and begin the process of bringing about the reunification of Ireland and the withdrawal — *[Interruption.]* — which is what the majority of people want?

The Prime Minister: No. Nor do I believe that such a statement is helpful in any way to getting the agreement accepted. I recognise both the hopes and fears of people in Northern Ireland. In a democracy, the majority in Northern Ireland should have the say, and the agreement says that the status of Northern Ireland will not be changed except with the consent of the majority. That gives a good deal of assurance to those who are in the majority and who wish the Union to remain, as I do.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is it true that the American Administration put great pressure on Her Majesty's Government to enter into this agreement? If it is true, would it not have been better to tell our American friends that matters concerning Northern Ireland are no business of theirs, to have thanked them for their offer of money but asked them to mind their own business?

The Prime Minister: No, it is not true. Naturally, when we began these negotiations, I told the United States Government that we were negotiating. I have had occasion many times to criticise those in the United States who contribute to Noraid and to ask for the help of the United States Government and her leading citizens to prevent those contributions, because they go to men of violence. They have always tried to assist us in stopping contributions to the men of violence. Yes, I believe that they wanted an agreement and I told them that we were negotiating, but at no stage did they put pressure on us.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): I never knew what desolation felt like until I read this agreement last Friday afternoon. Does the Prime Minister realise that, when she carries the agreement through the House, she will have ensured that I shall carry to my grave with ignominy the sense of the injustice that I have done to my constituents down the years — when, in their darkest hours, I exhorted them to put their trust in this British House of Commons which one day would honour its fundamental obligation to them to treat them as equal British citizens? Is not the reality of this agreement that they will now be Irish-British hybrids and that every aspect —not just some aspects—of their lives will be open to the influence of those who have harboured their murderers and coveted their land? Is the Prime Minister aware that that is too high a price for me and hundreds of thousands of others in Northern Ireland to pay?

The Prime Minister: No. The status of Northern Ireland cannot be changed unless the majority so wish. The hon. Gentleman chooses to ignore that, although it is one of the best assurances that he could have. The agreement also makes it clear that there is no derogation from the sovereignty of the United Kingdom Government or the Irish Government. Each retains responsibility for the decisions and administration of government with their own jurisdiction. The hon. Gentleman and a number of other hon. Members are trying to undermine that. They cannot; it is in the agreement and is a cardinal point of it.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Will the Prime Minister tell the House and the people of Northern Ireland what is the legal status of Northern Ireland in the eyes of the Irish Republic? Does she know that in a Derry newspaper today it is reported that one document that was signed by the right hon. Lady at the Hillsborough summit recognises Dr. Garret FitzGerald as the Prime Minister of Ireland? *[Interruption.]* The document is in the hands of the right hon. Lady. In response to a question about that, a Northern Ireland Office spokesman said:

"The references to the Governments are the same as has been followed in a variety of agreements between them for almost 20 years."

The Stormont spokesman added:

"Eire does not recognise the constitutional position of Northern Ireland."

That was an official statement from Stormont. On behalf of my constituents, I have a right to ask my Prime Minister, is she in agreement with that, or will she hold a ballot of the people of Northern Ireland and let them give their answer on the agreement?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is working himself up. *[Interruption.]* Equally the Taoiseach recognised me as the Prime Minister of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and it was in that capacity that I signed the agreement.

Rev. William McCrea: There is a difference.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is referring to a practice that has existed with regard to all agreements since April 1946. There are two descriptions, and one is as he described it, but there has been no change in that practice since 1946 and I have not heard him raise this point before, though he could have done so many times.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): To what does the reference to aspects of the criminal law being harmonised refer in article 8? What does the phrase "mixed courts" mean and what offences are contemplated in article 8 as being likely to be tried by mixed courts?

The Prime Minister: I am not going to put a gloss on any words in the agreement. There would only be difficulty if we attempted to do so. I have already answered the question about mixed courts. We say without any commitment that we shall consider the possibility of mixed courts, but in considering that possibility we are aware of the many difficulties that have arisen when it has been considered previously.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of people—certainly those on the mainland of the United Kingdom — will judge the validity of the Hillsborough agreement not so much by finer points of sovereignty as by simple facts: will the terrible killings and woundings in Northern Ireland decrease and, above all, will less be asked of British troops?

The Prime Minister: The purpose of the agreement is to mobilise the help of all the people in Northern Ireland and in the Republic who detest violence and reject it, as a way forward in order to defeat the men of violence. Our purpose is to achieve exactly the end which my hon. Friend has described.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that on Thursday I asked the Leader of the House whether one of his right hon. Friends

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

would tell the House today the basis on which, in the light of history, the Government built their confidence that any agreement would be kept and the change that will come about in the relationship with the Republic on recognition of the status of Northern Ireland?

I have listened intently to the Prime Minister's responses. No light has yet been thrown on my questions. The right hon. Lady says that this is the first time the status has been recognised in international law, but I would correct her, because we were so recognised in 1925. We have constantly been recognised as a fact of life and not de jure. There has been absolutely no change in that position. In this agreement, we have given the Government of the Republic a place to which they are not entitled.

The Prime Minister said that the status has been recognised and that the people's place has been protected. Why does article 1 state that a formal change would take place if the people of Northern Ireland decided that they wanted a United Ireland? They want something else. I ask the right hon. Lady to bear in mind the fact that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) assured us not that our Unionism would be protected but that our Protestantism might be respected.

The Prime Minister: I said in the statement that this was the most formal commitment to the principle of consent made by any Irish Government. The status of Northern Ireland in United Kingdom law is, of course, protected. I believe that this is the first time in a formal international agreement that the Republic has recognised this position in Northern Ireland and has recognised that it cannot be changed except with the consent of the majority.

Article 1 states:

"The two Governments

(a) affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland".

In a democracy the consent of the majority is required. Something else would also be required under our law—the consent of the House, and we should not——

Mr. McCusker: Oh, I see.

The Prime Minister: That is in our law as well. It is also a great protection for the Unionists in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the great majority of people on these islands, of which the Province forms but a part, greatly prefer a chance of reconciliation, which is wholly absent from the policies put forward by the representatives of the Ulster Protestant majority?

The Prime Minister: Yes, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. There is a chance for reconciliation, peace and stability, provided that all the people take that opportunity now.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): How can the Prime Minister reconcile article 9(a) about the right of the conference to

"set in hand a programme of work"

on aspects of security, including "operational resources" with article 9(b), which states:

"The Conference shall have no operational responsibilities"?

Does not the right hon. Lady realise that this is a contradiction, in that the Chief Constable and the Secretary of State cannot retain their operational integrity while the resources fall within the bailiwick of the conference? Does not the right hon. Lady further realise that the RUC manpower and all the military personnel operating in support of the RUC are, in fact, "operational resources"? Does not she realise that she has effectively placed our armed forces under the direct influence of another Government?

The Prime Minister: That article is about cross-border co-operation. We can raise matters relating to cross-border co-operation with the Republic through this intergovernmental conference—

"threat assessments, exchange of information, liaison structures, technical co-operation, training of personnel".

We can raise with the Republic matters affecting security because we both want to defeat the men of violence. The Government of the Republic can raise matters with us. Operations in Northern Ireland will come under our decisions and operations in the Republic under the Republic's decisions. This agreement is about co-operation. More co-operation is needed. It should be to the advantage of everyone in Northern Ireland.

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I hope that I shall not be accused of bias if I refer to a body with which I have some connection—the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Government's last initiative on Northern Ireland is likely to be overlooked. It has been overlooked so far in these exchanges. The Northern Ireland Assembly was set up more than three years ago by the British Government to create peace and stability and to bring about reconciliation and progress in Northern Ireland. I should like the Prime Minister to confirm that the Assembly is a democratically elected body, that it is elected under proportional representation and that every elected representative is on an equal footing. Will the right hon. Lady confirm that she continues to give it her full backing?

The Prime Minister: Of course, the Assembly was a democratically elected body. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, we hoped that more parties would participate in these proceedings than has been the case. We shall have to consider this matter together with the article that considers further devolved government structures in Northern Ireland. We have taken no decision on the Assembly, so at the moment it continues.

Mr. James Nicholson (Newry and Armagh): I represent a constituency that has suffered many atrocities in the past 16 years, many of which emanated from the Irish Republic. The right hon. Lady's remarks on Friday that we owe it to those who lost their lives to accept the agreement were highly offensive and totally insensitive. The families of those who lost their loved ones feel that they have been betrayed by the Prime Minister whom many of them may have trusted. Why should we accept the Prime Minister's solemn promises and assurances in the agreement when every other promise and assurance ever made by successive United Kingdom Governments have proved to be worthless and have succeeded only in bringing death and destruction? [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] If Conservative Members think that this is funny, I assure them that people in Northern Ireland do not think so. The agreement will only bring death and destruction and more anarchy to Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister: I should have thought that most people in Northern Ireland would honour the way in which the security forces have operated to protect them — whether the armed forces, the Ulster Defence Regiment or the Royal Ulster Constabulary under the aegis of the United Kingdom. I think we owe it to those young men and women who put their lives at risk in order to protect us to do everything we can to defeat the men of violence.

Rev. William McCrea: Visit their families and ask them.

The Prime Minister: I believe that most people in Northern Ireland would take that view.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): Now that the Government have formally recognised the Republic's inevitable interest in the affairs of the Province, will the Prime Minister confirm that it is the view of the people taking part in the negotiations that the agreement will succeed to the extent that the minority and the Republic join in ensuring that terrorists are exposed and prosecuted openly and without stint.

The Prime Minister: I accept my hon. Friend's remark and will go a little wider. It requires the co-operation in the North of all people who are against violence and requires also heightened cross-border co-operation with the Republic. That is what I believe the agreement offers.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Contrary to the Government spokesman's misleading remarks, the Unionists did not comment on the agreement before reading it. I should like to assure hon. Members that I have read and re-read, as have my colleagues, the detail of the deceitful betrayal that is enshrined in the agreement. Will the Prime Minister inform the House that the agreement represents the end of the union as we have known it and that it represents the beginning of joint London-Dublin authority in Northern Ireland? Will she confirm that, when the Anglo-Irish conference meets, it plans to approve other matters which have already been agreed to, as stated by Maurice Manning TD, but which have been concealed from hon. Members?

The Prime Minister: There is no truth in the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question. The agreement confirms the existence of the Union as long as that is the wish of the majority. That is diametrically opposed to the hon. Gentleman's comment. It also points out that, if devolved government on a basis acceptable to both traditions in Northern Ireland is established, the matters within the scope of the intergovernmental conference are thereby diminished as some matters would fall wholly within the responsibility of devolved government. It therefore gives hope not only for the continuation of the Union but that when devolved government occurs on that basis the intergovernmental conference will have less of a role.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As we have opposed with vigour and determination proposals for devolution for Scotland and Wales on the ground that they would inevitably lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom, is it prudent to put forward such proposals in the even more complex and difficult circumstances of Northern Ireland? Secondly, will the Prime Minister tell us what a mixed court is?

The Prime Minister: The situation in Northern Ireland, as my hon. Friend is aware, is quite different from that of Scotland, Wales or any other part of the United Kingdom. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] A mixed court, as I understand it, is one that would have a judge from the other part of Ireland; that would be reciprocal. There could be mixed courts in the North and in the South, if there were a decision to go ahead with them. I made it clear that we are bound to consider the possibility without commitment, because we are aware of the difficulties that would ensue if there were mixed courts. We do not see much possibility of that taking place in the near future.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): Will the right hon. Lady confirm, or categorically deny, the assertion of the Irish Republic's Minister of Justice, Mr. Noonan? He said on American television at the weekend, that his Government's role

"is substantial, not merely advisory. In effect the Irish Republic has been given a major and substantial role in the day-to-day running of Northern Ireland."

The Prime Minister: The agreement is there for all to see. I do not put a gloss on it. The words

"There is no derogation from the sovereignty"

are as clear as any in the agreement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Is it not the case, as shown in this historic agreement, which I welcome because it is necessary, that Northern Ireland suffers from political problems as well as terrorism, and that the local communities in Northern Ireland, and especially their leaders, for reasons both good and bad, have failed to resolve them?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the problems are also political, but the purpose of the agreement is to mobilise politicians from both sides against violence so that politics can be conducted in the usual way — in peace and stability.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker (Belfast, North): Is the Prime Minister aware that Unionist Members of Parliament were only given a copy of the document some hours after its release to the press? Does the Prime Minister expect the Unionist people to believe that the ambiguities and contradictions that are framed in the document will not be accepted? Does she also realise that the various articles enshrined in the agreement suggest a coalition rather than a consultative role for the Irish Republic?

The Prime Minister: That is precisely what the agreement does not do. I believe that, in trying to give that interpretation, the hon. Gentleman is needlessly arousing fears. Let me make it clear that the agreement affirms

"that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

The agreement confirms that there is no derogation of the sovereignty of the United Kingdom, and that decision making north of the border is for the United Kingdom. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will put that about among Unionists and loyalists in Northern Ireland and Unionists and loyalists in this country—of whom I am one.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): While I support the intentions of the agreement, inasmuch as it is proper or possible for an Englishman to pass judgment, does not my right hon. Friend agree that the document changes the status of Northern Ireland by allowing the Irish Republic to have greater influence over the affairs in the North? As this is a good agreement, and as undoubtedly the people of Northern Ireland will see it as a good

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

agreement, would it not be sensible and helpful to allow the people of Northern Ireland to have a referendum? We criticised Arthur Scargill for not having a ballot, and it would strengthen our position if there were a referendum.

The Prime Minister: It would not do any good, and we have no intention of having a referendum. I believe that for Unionists the agreement gives the assurance of no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority; it gives the prospect of increased co-operation with the south; it gives the prospect of support for devolution from both Governments, and it offers the prospect that the Republic will accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. That is good for all Unionists in Northern Ireland.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the imaginative and courageous step that the agreement represents. I further remind her that the issue of peace in Northern Ireland is not just a matter of concern for the representatives of the people from Northern Ireland. In this Parliament, we are all concerned for peace and a settlement in Northern Ireland. We are ready to hear those representatives. Let them fight their cause and argue their case. We can well hear them. This is a matter for the whole Parliament.

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. The status of Northern Ireland is protected in an Act passed by this whole Parliament. The success of the agreement will mean that we expect all of those in Northern Ireland who hate violence to work together in the spirit of the agreement.

Okehampton Bypass Bill (Mr. Speaker's Ruling)

4.30 pm

Mr. Speaker: Last Thursday the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) raised a point of order questioning the procedure being followed on the Okehampton Bypass (Confirmation of Orders) Bill, which will come before the House tomorrow. The procedure under which the House deals with a Bill to confirm a special procedure order is laid down in section 6 of the Statutory Orders (Special Procedures) Act 1945. In the circumstances of this particular Bill, section 6 provides that the Bill is to proceed directly to its consideration stage followed by Third Reading. I have no power to vary this statutory procedure.

I have looked carefully at the particular point raised by the hon. Member, that, since the orders which the Bill is to confirm were before Parliament in the last Session, a resolution of the House to authorise the carrying over of the Orders from last Session to this one was necessary. I am, however, satisfied that there is nothing in the 1945 Act to prevent the House from proceeding with a Bill to confirm a special procedure order where such an order was before the House in a previous Session.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

4.41 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Anglo-Irish agreement and the fact that the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic affirms that that agreement provides that the question of how security should be organised in Northern Ireland is one for the conference, thus destroying the sovereignty of this House over security in part of Her Majesty's dominions."

I have been asked to say whether the matter is specific. It is. The Prime Minister of the Irish Republic is on record on television, on radio and in the press. When he arrived back from the Hillsborough summit he said that in future the Ulster Defence Regiment will operate differently from the way in which it has operated over the last 12 years.

"That means,"

said Dr. FitzGerald,

"that from now on, as soon as this can be put into effect, the position at present, whereby the Ulster Defence Regiment can hold people up on the road, stop them, search them, and question them will no longer operate."

Therefore, it is specific.

Is it important to the people who sit in comfort in this House? It is of the utmost importance to those on the border in Northern Ireland, who never see a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and whose only defence is the Ulster Defence Regiment. Hon. Members talk about representatives from Ulster being stirred up. Last night I sat in a home where a father and mother were mourning their young boy who was assassinated by the IRA because he was a member of the security forces. It is important that the border in Northern Ireland be given proper defence.

Is it urgent? There is nothing more urgent than the lives of the citizens of Northern Ireland. Today, tomorrow and the next day the Dail will be discussing the affairs of Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Members of this House, the only place where we can put our views to the Government, are denied the right of instant debate.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing an important and specific matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the statement by the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic that the question of how security should be organised is one for the conference, thus destroying the sovereignty of this House over security in part of the United Kingdom."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Member has said. As he knows, my sole duty in considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter he has raised meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

Singleton Hospital, Swansea

4.44 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Standing Order No. 10 requires that a matter be brought to the House at the earliest possible moment. I therefore apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, and to colleagues throughout the House, for raising this subject on so important a day, but I must ask the leave of the House to move the Adjournment under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that needs urgent consideration.

The question is self-evidently specific, because it deals with Friday's decision to close, next weekend, the casualty unit at Singleton hospital in Swansea. I rise on this matter today because, as you may recollect, Mr. Speaker—you were in the Chair—the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts), in answer to my Adjournment debate last Thursday night, said he rejected the proposition from the West Glamorgan health authority that this unit should close. Like myself, he condemned the health authority for its inadequate consultation and for its eventual decision that there should be no recognition of the proposal on which it had been consulting over a period of 10 years.

The urgency arises because, despite the fact that as recently as Thursday evening the Parliamentary Under-Secretary gave the Government's view, the following morning, 12 hours later, the West Glamorgan health authority announced that it intended to go ahead with the closure next weekend, on 24 November. More astonishingly, in view of what the Parliamentary Under-Secretary said in the House, it also claimed that the statement it issued had been cleared and approved by the Welsh Office. I have since established with the Welsh Office that that is accurate. It is important because it is intended to keep this essential facility for Swansea closed for possibly up to six months during the consultative period on a possible replacement.

I submit that this is a specific and urgent problem in that, having accepted that west Swansea and Gower need a casualty service, the Secretary of State is now endorsing a move to close the existing service this weekend and to allow up to six months before providing a replacement. I submit that this proposal is at the very least contradictory and at worst idiotic and irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the closure of Singleton hospital".

I have listened carefully to what the right hon. Member has said, but I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and I cannot therefore submit his application to the House.

National Coal Board

4.48 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"bribery by National Coal Board officials."

Those officials tried to woo certain trade union leaders in the National Union of Mineworkers into the Union of Democratic Miners. They were using taxpayers' money in the process. This matter is specific because on 9 November the deputy chairman of the National Coal Board, James Cowan, and Kevin Hunt, the industrial relations director, approached Jack Jones, the general secretary of the Leicestershire miners. By and large, the Leicestershire coalfield was not engaged in the 1984-85 strike.

During the course of the conversation, which took place at Blackpool at the National Coal Board brass band championships, Hunt and Cowan asked Jack Jones about leading his men into the Union of Democratic Miners and coming out of the National Union of Mineworkers. They said to him, "One of the ways in which we can facilitate this matter is by taking care of your pension, Jack, and making sure that we will provide you with a car in order to do your union business." That is bribery on a grand scale and it is strange that it comes at a time when the Government and the Coal Board are calling upon the National Union of Mineworkers to sign a document with the aim of improving efficiency in the coalfields so as to save money. Yet they are prepared to use money to try to smash the National Union of Mineworkers and to set up a bosses' union in Leicestershire.

It is specific because it is also alleged that the practice has already taken place in respect of other officials in other areas. It is a very urgent matter because bribery and treating, in the legal sense, constitutes a criminal act. Therefore, it is necessary for the House to debate the matter in full so that the appropriate action can be taken.

As you have not found time, Mr. Speaker, for the two other applications, I ask you to look very kindly at this one.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"bribery by National Coal Board officials."

I listened with great care to what the hon. Member said, but I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Orders of the Day

Local Government Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.51 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Government have presented this short Bill to the House to protect the interests of the ratepayer by strengthening local government law in a few important areas.

The present law was formulated in very different circumstances. It relied on the common acceptance of well-established conventions in local government—the convention that public funds should not be used for party political purposes and the principle that proper financial management was an essential responsibility of councillors and officers alike.

The traditional values of integrity and propriety hold good in the vast majority of councils, but in some authorities there are councillors who are determined to push the law to its limits—and even beyond—in pursuit of political confrontation. It is all too clear that they will not shrink from exploiting all the resources of our democratic institutions to promote their own political and personal ambitions.

The object of the Bill is to protect the interests of the electorate and of the ratepayer. The public are concerned about party political propaganda which has taken millions of pounds from the ratepayers' pockets. Equally, it is the Government's duty to stop the antics which only increase costs.

The main provisions of the Bill will not affect the day-to-day business of the vast majority of councils. Most authorities of all political persuasions conduct their business in an orderly and responsible manner, but a small number of councils have found the loopholes and marched through them. We must stop the abuses and provide new legal safeguards against the deplorable extravagances.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Baker: I will give way later. I should first like to launch the ship and get it out to sea.

I was making the point that most councils behave in an orderly and responsible manner, but a small number of them have found the loopholes and marched through them. We must stop the abuses and provide new legal safeguards against those extravagances. Rates were never meant to fund the personal ego trips of a handful of councillors who use their spending power at local level to create a springboard to further their own political careers at national level.

I must re-emphasise that the Bill merely reinforces the conventional rules of good practice that are the norm in the overwhelming majority of local authorities across the country. We are clarifying what most people believe the position to be.

I should like to quote from a leader in the *Financial Times*. It is not every day that we get a leader in the

Financial Times congratulating us upon local government legislation. Therefore, the House will not blame me for drawing its attention to it. The report says:

"It is unreasonable to expect ratepayers to foot the bill for such political brinkmanship. The only pity about Mr. Baker's Bill to force councils to set a rate by the start of the financial year is that it has become necessary to legislate for common sense."

That quotation brings me to the first clause of the Bill. Until recently, it would never have occurred to anyone that there might be a need to impose a statutory duty on councils to make a rate on or before the first day of the financial year. Councils behaved reasonably and sensibly. They accepted that it was in the interests of all parties —the council, its employees, the electorate and ratepayers —to make a rate on time. But this year 30 councils decided to try to overturn Government policy by not setting a rate.

The councils hoped for a united front. In the end 13 of the 30 did not set a rate by 1 April. The united front had broken. After that date most councils got cold feet. It was supposed to be the great spring offensive. It petered out by Easter and came to a grinding halt by July. Militant generals in charge of that fiasco, hoping to die on a barricade, led their troops to an ignominious defeat in their own council chambers at the hands of moderates. That is why clause 1 is necessary.

If Opposition Members seek to say that clause 1 is not necessary, they will have to say why Scotland has managed to have the provision since 1973. If they find clause 1 so objectionable, why, when they were in power, did they not change the law relating to Scotland?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As my right hon. Friend knows, some local authorities are not reluctant to break the law. What is to happen to those local authorities which do not set a legal rate by 1 April?

Mr. Baker: In certain circumstances it may be physically impossible to set a rate, due to illness or something of that sort. Clause 1(3) allows for that, but I emphasise that that is not a let-out, and the obligation remains.

If a rate is made late deliberately, two consequences might follow. On application of an interested party, a court could require the council to fulfil the duty and could make an order of mandamus. In addition, the breach of duty would provide prima facie evidence of wilful misconduct, and the auditor, who is completely independent of the Government, might initiate action against the councillors for the recovery of any resulting loss of funds. It was the existence of a date — 10 March — for the precepting authorities this year which led them to make their decisions by that date. It led to the celebrated and televised meeting of the GLC when it had to meet a date.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

I now turn to the second clause, which deals with publicity. In February this year my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) set up the Widdicombe inquiry into the conduct of local authority business. We asked the inquiry to consider as a matter of urgency the question of political publicity, and it published its interim report on the issue in August. I am grateful to the committee for having performed that part of its task so expeditiously.

The report confirmed that some councils were producing material of a partisan nature that was published more for political gain than as a means of informing the electorate. The report says:

"In our view some of what has been done by certain local authorities goes beyond what should properly be done out of public funds. Some material we have seen is directly or indirectly party political, and some goes beyond what we consider to be the proper scope of local government advertising."

The committee went on to say:

"Our general conclusion therefore is that there is a problem that needs to be dealt with."

The Widdicombe inquiry recognised that it was implicit in the present law that local authorities should not spend public money on party political matters, but it recommended that that implicit prohibition should be given statutory effect. The Government agree with that view.

I will remind the House of the nature of the material that we have seen funded by rates. The GLC's

"Three out of four Londoners"

poster has been plastered over London's bill boards and in national newspapers this year. In the national press alone, the GLC spent £104,000 on that advertisement. It would have paid for the concessionary fares for a year of over 1,700 pensioned and disabled Londoners.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baker: In a moment.

In *Tribune* in July, Ken Livingstone — do hon. Members remember him?—boasted:

"The GLC has got more bill boards than any other advertiser in London and it has the best sites."

He went on to say:

"We have done polling on a scale that the Labour party could not afford."

The GLC did not hesitate to suppress polls which showed support rapidly ebbing away from the GLC. The GLC has spent well over £10 million on political campaigning, and that money should have been returned to the people of London.

Mr. Banks: Will the Secretary of State say what particular group of pensioners or disabled people have not benefited from the GLC's concessionary fares? The expenditure by the GLC on advertising has not prevented it from spending money also on concessionary fares for pensioners. They all enjoy those fares in London. After the abolition of the GLC, those concessionary fares will be under threat.

Mr. Baker: The answer is no. That intervention is up to the hon. Gentleman's usual standard. That money should have been spent on social needs, and he recognises that. The GLC has spent on bill boards, advertising, posters, hats, balloons and the rest of it to promote political causes. That is how money has been spent to serve the interests of Londoners.

The people of Liverpool have been deluged in a flood of political propaganda on the rates. It starts with the council's letter heading which blatantly states, "Liverpool —a Socialist Council". It published a leaflet this year saying, "Support Liverpool Labour Council." That was paid for by Liverpool ratepayers, many of whom are council workers, facing no pay this week due to Councillor Hatton's fixation with bringing down the Government.

The headline of the April edition of *Liverpool News*, a civic newspaper, said that there was the horrific prospect

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of a 220 per cent. rate rise and a loss of 6,000 jobs. That was the view in April, yet in November what do we find? The report produced by four treasurers from Labour authorities concluded that a 15 per cent. rate increase plus other measures would balance Liverpool's budget. The people of Liverpool were deliberately misled by their militant council's propaganda.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for mentioning the grave situation in the city of Liverpool. If, at this late stage, the city council is moved or persuaded to act on the variety of options to balance its budget, would the right hon. Gentleman be willing to meet leaders of Liverpool city council to discuss its serious financial problems?

Mr. Baker: I must remind the hon. Gentleman that the financial problems with which the city of Liverpool is now faced are the making of the Liverpool city council. I have made it clear to the council that it must discharge its legal responsibilities, but it shows no sign of doing so. The city council was sent the Stonefrost report, which included ways in which the books could be balanced. It was prompted by the general secretaries of the trade unions and, indeed, was supported by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). The councillors' refusal to examine or act upon these proposals is at the heart of Liverpool's problems. I shall see the councillors only if they discharge their legal responsibilities, balance the books and set a rate which matches expenditure.

I will see the councillors only when they act legally and responsibly to resolve the financial crisis in Liverpool this year. It is their responsibility to resolve the crisis.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): If the city council balanced its budget and met the Secretary of State, would he discuss its capital programme and his predecessor's letter? The letter gave some undertaking to assist Liverpool with its capital and house building programmes.

Mr. Baker: When the city councillors restore themselves to legality, in line with others, we shall discuss other matters with them. I want to discuss with the councillors their vendetta against the co-operative housing movement, which has been waged with unremitting ferocity by the militant council, and the ways in which the private sector can assist with the housing problem in Liverpool. However, I emphasise what I said earlier—the crisis facing Liverpool is the making of Liverpool city council.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Leicester city council spent £594,200 between 1983 and 1985 on political poster advertising, including £67,000 on anti-rate capping, and that, this year, the council has budgeted for £377,300. Does he agree that this is a shocking abuse of ratepayers' money and why clause 2 is necessary and will be welcomed by the people of Leicester?

Mr. Baker: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that Leicester city council has quite fruitlessly spent a great deal on a political campaign. Such money could have been better spent on social objectives in the city. As a result of the Rates Act 1984 we were able to secure a substantial reduction in the rates, which will help his constituents.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The right hon. Gentleman said that Liverpool city council has not considered the Stonefrost report, but the Labour councillors have studied it in great depth. That they have concluded that it is of no help is a matter of opinion, but it is not right for the Minister to say that Liverpool city councillors have not studied the report when they have, and carefully.

Mr. Baker: That makes matters even worse. That report has been welcomed on all sides of the political spectrum. It offered several ways in which to balance the books. Its rejection shows an intransigence and a stubborness which cannot be in the interests of the people of Liverpool.

Mr. Wareing: When the Secretary of State dealt with clause 1, he remonstrated about the situation in Scotland since 1974. I remind him that, under the Labour Government, the rate was fixed in Scotland and, as with authorities in England and Wales, Scottish local authorities were able to levy a supplementary rate. The right to levy a supplementary rate was abolished by the right hon. Gentleman's predecessors, not by the Labour Government. Present circumstances are not similar to what happened under previous Governments. Far from being able to meet increases in expenditure, which often result from factors outside local authority control, the council now levies a supplementary rate. Will clause 2 outlaw the sort of propaganda which appeared in the Merseyside County Extra in April 1981?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Many hon. Members wish to speak and lengthy interventions are made at the expense of other hon. Members who wish to speak. However, the Secretary of State might wish to reply to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) has made a false point. At no stage did any of the 13 councils, which did not set a rate by 1 April this year, say they were delaying to set a supplementary rate. Nobody welcomes the reintroduction of powers to set supplementary rates. When the rates have been set at inadequate levels, as in Liverpool, the procedure is straightforward. Interested parties can go to the courts. There is an application at the moment by a trade union against the city of Liverpool for the rate to be quashed and another rate set.

I wish to proceed to clause 2 and subsequent clauses on propaganda. I was making the point that for London and Liverpool there was ample evidence of the misuse of ratepayers' money. That was supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels).

Lambeth council has also indulged in a great deal of party political propaganda, on which it has spent £400,000. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has a flat or house in Lambeth, and earlier this year, in Committee, he was constantly telling us about the vast waste of money. Again, instead of spending £400,000 to improve refuge collection in Lambeth, it was spent on banners, stickers and the rest of it.

Haringey has spent £300,000 on press and publicity campaigning. My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) is one of the representatives of that area. I can tell him that Councillor

Grant visited my Department last week to demand a blank cheque of taxpayers' money further to finance his council. There is no question that Haringey has deprived areas, but just imagine how many housing repairs on the Broadwater Farm estate that £300,000, which was spent on propaganda, would pay for.

We all view with disgust Councillor Grant's use of his council's publicity machine to spread his hostility towards the police, and I am astonished that the Labour party continues to endorse him as a parliamentary candidate.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman, and I shall not give way to him again.

Then there is Islington. Councillor Margaret Hodge, chair of the Association of London Authorities and leader of Islington, has called the Bill "totalitarian and oppressive." I think opposition councillors in her area would use exactly that description of her propaganda campaign. Indeed, in a MORI poll commissioned by Islington council in January this year, most respondents felt that the council spent too much money on its anti-Government publicity campaign. The response of Councillor Hodge to that was that the council

"still needs to do more to convince residents that we have their interests at heart."

In other words, more propaganda is needed. Therefore, it is no coincidence that in July this year Islington advertised for a chief press campaign and publicity officer at £19,000 a year. The advertisement stated:

"Campaigning will be a major activity and flair and experience in this area will be very important."

The council had to advertise the vacancy because the previous head of Islington's propaganda department resigned after he and his staff had written to Councillor Hodge complaining that they had been asked to tell lies during the campaign.

I remind hon. Members who still doubt the need for action in this area that, in total, at least £20 million has been spent on political advertising and propaganda since this Parliament began.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I have already given way several times. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way again.

Clause 2(1) prohibits local authorities from publishing, or giving financial assistance to another person to publish, material designed to affect support for a political party or a body, cause or campaign identified with a political party. It sets out an objective test for authorities, and, in the case of challenge, for the auditor and the courts to use.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

Mr. Baker: I regret that I shall not give way.

Clause 2(2) requires that in defining the scope of the prohibition one must have regard to whether the material specifically refers to a political party or to persons identified with a political party, or, if material is to be published as part of a campaign, to the effect that that campaign is designed to achieve. In other words, we are seeking to ensure that the law clearly recognises that material which might appear perfectly proper if taken in isolation could, in the context of a sustained campaign, clearly promote a broad party political message.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I support the principle behind the legislation, and my concern is simple and specific. Will my right hon. Friend consider today, or in future, substituting a definition which considers the question of the content of the material that is being produced rather than its intent or effect? Both of those latter categories are much harder to measure, and many more cases will end up in the courts than would otherwise be the case.

Mr. Baker: The Widdicombe report dealt specifically with the tone and content of advertising, because often it is the tone and content which takes the particular advertisement over the top. We have enshrined the basic principles which the Widdicombe inquiry sought to achieve in clause 2, but later we allow for a code of conduct to be drawn up. I suspect that a code of conduct will be concerned with the tone and content of particular advertisements.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): My right hon. Friend has raised the question of a code of conduct, which is covered by clause 4. Is the code of conduct intended to have any consequences in law? If so, what are they? Will the code of conduct be brought before the House for our approval?

Mr. Baker: The answer to the latter point is yes. I propose to consult widely on the code with local authority associations and local government, and then to draw it up. I do not propose to go firm on the code until the Widdicombe inquiry has made final recommendations in the spring or summer of next year, because it has stated that it may have further comments on the code. I was envisaging a code somewhat similar to the Highway Code. However, I am prepared to consider what is the best way forward on this. A code of conduct against which councils can measure their attitude towards advertising and promotion is probably one of the best ways to proceed. There is no way that I shall slap a code down and say, "Take it or leave it", about which I think my hon. Friend is worried.

Clause 2(3) debars authorities from giving financial or other assistance to proxy organisations for the purpose of producing publicity material which would otherwise be prohibited by the clause.

I have no doubt that some Opposition Members are already dusting down their references to censorship. Those who oppose the measure are saying, "Let councils spend their money on political campaigns." I have no objection to political campaigning. All politicians indulge in political campaigning, but the costs should be borne by political parties, not ratepayers or taxpayers. The Bill will not interfere with any legitimate non-party based publicity activities. *[Interruption.]* As I understand it, the sale of council houses enjoys broad political support on both sides of the House. Therefore, it could not be considered to be party political. A distinction must be drawn between the legitimate dissemination of information on policy and functions and a party political diatribe at public expense.

Clause 3(1) amends the existing powers of local authorities to provide information under section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 88 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, making it clear that the power relates to the publication of material relating to services or to the functions of the authority. In the Government's view, that does no more than reflect more

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accurately Parliament's original intentions in passing the 1972 and 1973 Acts. It is no part of the duty of local authorities to spend ratepayers' money on such wholly non-local matters as defence policy or foreign affairs.

As the Widdicombe inquiry recommended, clause 3(2) amends section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 83 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to stop local authorities from using those discretionary spending powers for publicity. But those powers are still available for assistance to voluntary organisations or public authorities where publicity is a necessary ancillary to their main activities.

Clause 4 enables me, in consultation with representative local government bodies, to issue codes of recommended practice, as my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and I have been discussing. It also requires authorities to have regard to a code. I welcome the initiative already taken by some of the professional organisations concerned in that area.

Clause 5 requires local authorities to keep a separate account of their expenditure on publicity, and makes the normal provisions for inspection of the account by members of the public. The Widdicombe inquiry found that many councils had no idea of their total spending on publicity. The clause should go some way to improve authorities' accountability in that area of public concern.

Part III deals with the transfer of local authority mortgages. Hon. Members will recall that on 23 July my right hon. Friend announced that the Government would legislate at the earliest possible opportunity to prevent local authorities from disposing of their interest in a mortgage without obtaining the borrower's consent. Clause 7 prohibits a local authority from disposing of its interest in a mortgage without the prior written consent of the borrower. The ordinary council borrower at present risks finding that the mortgage has been transferred without his having any say in the matter. That cannot be right. Subsections (5) and (6), of clause 7 enable me to make regulations to ensure that borrowers are told everything that they need to know when they are asked to consent to the sale of their mortgage.

Clause 8 provides that authorities will not gain a capital receipt from a mortgage sale unless the risk is transferred to the buyer. For certain housing mortgages, the consent provisions are retrospective to midnight on the day that my right hon. Friend made his announcement. These mortgages were specified in a letter sent by my Department to all local authorities on that day. For all other mortgages, the provision will apply to disposals on or after 1 April 1986.

Clause 10 remedies an inadvertent defect in the Local Government Act 1985 so that there is no doubt over the eligibility of members of ILEA and council members of joint authorities for attendance allowances.

Mr. Marlow *rose——*

Mr. Baker: I hope my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not give way. Perhaps he can raise his point later.

This is a short Bill dealing with a small number of matters relating to local authority practice and which, but for recent developments in a small number of councils, I would not need to bring before the House today. By convention, most authorities do not use public funds for political publicity. As a matter of good practice they set their rates before the beginning of the financial year. Any reasonable authority would seek each borrower's consent before selling his mortgage.

Unfortunately, the people of this country can no longer rely on the traditional conventions, nor on good administrative practice, to govern the decisions of some councils. Therefore, we need to strengthen the law in the interests of ratepayers and for the long-term benefit of local government as a whole.

Unlike many of the Left-wing councillors at the root of local government's current problems, I am in the business of strengthening accountability, thereby reinforcing our traditional democratic institutions at local level. This is one of the main reasons why the Government have asked the Widdicombe inquiry to consider in its main report whether the safeguards against abuse are adequate. Its task is complex and important and will no doubt have implications for the conduct of local authority business in this country at least to the end of the century. I look forward to receiving its report and recommendations early next year. In the meantime, the Bill deals with the matters that we believe to be of very great and immediate importance in the conduct of local authority affairs, and I commend it to the House.

5.22 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): This is the first parliamentary opportunity to congratulate the Secretary of State on his promotion to the Cabinet. It is a very important job, given the manifest problems faced by local authorities, the people who work in them and many communities throughout the country. I wish the right hon. Gentleman well, but given the experiences of his predecessor I fear the worst.

The right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), who had a long and honourable career in office within a number of different Departments, demonstrated an integrity, courtesy and ability, at least in personal terms, to work with Opposition spokesmen, despite our deep clashes over policy. I place on record my appreciation of those aspects of the right hon. Gentleman's work.

I never like beginning a speech with an apology, but I should explain that because of a long standing engagement — the sixth Hamptons lecture organised by the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers — I have to give a second speech this evening on the other side of London. I therefore hope the House will excuse me if I leave shortly after I have finished this speech, but I expect to be back in time to hear the conclusion of the debate.

The Secretary of State made a thin speech about a thick Bill. Predictably, this Conservative Government are taking the earliest possible opportunity in the new Session of Parliament to expand their attack on local democracy and freedoms. Yet again, we have a Local Government Bill, the twelfth since 1979, that will further restrict the free choice of all elected local councils from parish to county level—those of every kind of political control and those of no political control—to act in what they believe to be the best interests of the communities that elect them.

The proposals in the Bill again remove the judgment and discretion of elected authorities to speak out for their towns, cities, counties, districts or parishes and to oppose not just central Government but each other. The Bill

prevents advice being given and facts being made available to voluntary bodies, trade unions, charities and even the professions.

Frankly, this Bill disgusts me. It is a tawdry little measure. It assumes that, in a plural democratic society, an elected local authority is simply an agent of Government carrying out a set of functions and not, as we believe and as millions of people of all political persuasions have always believed, that councils are elected to speak for their communities—their areas—and their hopes, fears and aspirations.

The Bill also disgusts me because, in common with all its Conservative predecessors, it demeans local government, diminishes its ability to represent and drags it further into the control of the central Whitehall web. The Bill is nothing less than an attempt to gag local government, to silence opposition, to censor debate and seriously to reduce the free flow of argument and ideas. As it stands, it ensures that councils cannot even publish information on the welfare of their areas. Communities are apparently to be denied the means of self-expression. Even worse, it seems that campaigns in support of people dying or suffering malnutrition, disease and poverty in other countries such as Ethiopia will no longer be legal—to such depths have this Government sunk!

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is saying that the Bill is a gag on freedom of expression. Is he really saying that it is proper for local authorities to use public money to make party political points and to wage a political, partisan campaign, because that is inherent in the argument he is now advancing?

Dr. Cunningham: The Americans would have a word for what the hon. Gentleman has just said. He is way ahead of himself. If only he had the patience and courtesy to wait until I had got further into my speech, he would know how fatuous that intervention is.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Answer the question.

Dr. Cunningham: I shall come to the answer in a moment. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) should also keep his mouth shut for a little while.

Almost 200 years ago, in his inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson reminded the people that, although the will of the majority in a democracy would always prevail, to be rightful that will must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal right too, which equal law must protect; and that to violate such protection would be oppression. I am sorry that this Government continue to demonstrate that they are no respecter of such ideals.

This Conservative Government increasingly demonstrate that they cannot face up to the competition of ideas, argument and debate that are so essential in a healthy, free and robust democracy. Nor can we accept the way in which the Government have acted in fabricating a case for the main proposals in the Bill.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Member likes to criticise the Government. Perhaps he will comment on what the Labour party is doing with Liverpool's leaders.

Dr. Cunningham: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman's intervention has anything to do with what I was saying, but if he is in any doubt about the view taken by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, the Labour party and my colleagues and myself on the Opposition Front Bench about the situation in Liverpool, I cannot understand where he has been for the past three or four weeks.

The Widdicombe inquiry was established to present an independent, dispassionate view of fundamentally important issues affecting the health of local democracy. The Government insisted, wrongly in our view, on an interim report. We asked why at the time: what was the rush? Why hurry matters of such importance? We now know the reason. They wished to bounce legislation through Parliament before next year's vital nationwide local government elections.

The right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford, when Secretary of State for the Environment, gave the impression more than once that he had prejudged the issue, and in doing so had compromised the inquiry. I deeply regret that the present Secretary of State for the Environment has been even worse in that respect. His comments at the *Local Government Chronicle* dinner at the Cafe Royal in October, and subsequently in the media, have seriously damaged the work of the Widdicombe inquiry—so much so that, now aware of the seriousness of his error, he is trying desperately to back-track and to re-establish the credibility of the inquiry. Mr. Widdicombe felt so angered that he wrote to the press to restate publicly his committee's independence from the views of the Conservative party.

The hasty publication of the Bill and the fact that its proposals ignore most of what Widdicombe has to say on the matters at issue are further evidence of the Government's determination to enforce their own opinions regardless of the evidence. As with the Rates Act 1984 and the Act to abolish the metropolitan counties and the GLC, the Bill lacks any sound principles or coherent arguments in its favour.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): The hon. Gentleman insists that the Government are somehow flouting the rights of minorities and groups with views different from their own. We are faced with a load of propaganda for a certain viewpoint and not the even-handed distribution of money or the even-handed presentation of a case by councils. The hon. Gentleman has admitted that, but for the Bill he and the Labour party would be using existing powers to flood their councils and ratepayers with propaganda on the eve of the next election.

Dr. Cunningham: I reject the hon. Gentleman's argument, as I said no such thing. I shall come to some of the details of the arguments for and against what the hon. Gentleman has just mentioned.

The Bill is a hotchpotch of disparate measures, badly drafted and hastily cobbled together. As it stands, it will be true to the Government's record because it will make very bad law. It brings together proposals on rating law, local government finance, publicity and information and allowances for members of new authorities. Part II demonstrates the Government's uncanny knack of uniting the whole of local government against them. From the National Association of Local Councils, representing over 11,000 parishes and town councils nationwide, through the districts, boroughs and counties, the condemnation of the Bill is unanimous.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations was cheated by the Government with false promises during the passage of the abolition Bill and was rightly angered by

[Dr. Cunningham]

the damaging changes in the administration of the traditional urban programme, which will destroy the work of many of its constituent members. The council has once again expressed its deep anxiety at the likely effect of this legislation on the ability of local authorities financially to assist voluntary organisations throughout Britain.

The council is right to be alarmed. In the Bill, the Government continue to undermine and damage the effectiveness of service provision by local authorities and voluntary organisations by savagely reducing funding for information and campaigns about service provisions. In part II, the Government seek to deny a long-established reality, that local government is a political institution. The Widdicombe committee recognised that reality and concluded that it was acceptable, in principle, for local authorities to publicise controversial matters, whether political or not.

The report argues in paragraph 122 that local authorities

"have a long recognised and important contribution to make to political debate on matters concerning them."

It states in paragraph 123 that they are "intrinsically political". That has always been true of local government in Britain whatever political party has been in government. The Labour party shares the view expressed by the Widdicombe committee and it is astonishing to hear the Conservative party, and apparently other political parties such as the Liberal party and the SDP, deny its validity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *rose*——

Dr. Cunningham: No, I shall not give way.

The only distinction that the inquiry made was between material issued in the interests of a local authority and that issued in furtherance of a single political party. As a number of hon. Members have asked me about this in interventions, it is clear that they have not read the evidence that was presented to the Widdicombe committee, in which the Labour party made it clear that it does not support party political propaganda paid for by local authorities out of the rates. That is made clear in the evidence to the committee and I repeat it now. Conservative Members have demonstrated that they do not understand what is at stake.

What damns the Government as duplicitous is that the report does not identify a single example of an explicitly party political advertising campaign by a local authority. Widdicombe does not identify one, and it is quite wrong for the Secretary of State or Conservative Members to suggest otherwise.

Another major prop in the Tory campaign for these powers of censorship was knocked away when the inquiry reported that there was no substantial evidence of public concern. That was another fabrication which was being used to support the proposals contained in the Bill.

In addition, council spending on publicity constitutes a small amount of total spending. The report claims that expenditure on controversial issues of publicity forms "a very small part" of such spending. The committee went on to express the views that local authorities had a valuable contribution to make on policy matters wider than those strictly related to their statutory functions and that councils themselves should decide on the level of their publicity expenditure. It considered that local government publicity strengthened the democratic base and open government.

In contradiction to these views and conclusions, the Bill addresses five issues considered by the Widdicombe inquiry and in four of them either ignores or contradicts its findings. In addition, the drafting of the legislation is likely to create an administrative nightmare.

The Opposition have no objection in principle to clause 1. As the Secretary of State said, it brings the position of rate-making authorities in England into line with that of those in Scotland and the position for precepting authorities in England. The Opposition will have some detailed questions to raise in Committee.

Clause 2 is supposed to ban political publicity. There are three possible tests for such political publicity: the intentions of the authorities, the nature and the content of the publicity itself and the effects of the publicity. Widdicombe plumped for the nature and content test and recommended that

"there should be an express statutory prohibition of local authority publicity of a party-political nature."

It is clear that such material is already illegal under general administrative law. All that Widdicombe asks for is a declaration of the existing law.

The Government have ignored the committee and gone for both the other tests—intention and effect. Clause 2 prohibits material if it

"appears to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for . . . a political party, or . . cause".

The second part of the clause 2 test is most damaging. The prohibition of material "likely to affect" support for a party is a subjective test which may effectively rule out any publicity on controversial issues.

Widdicombe repeatedly emphasises that councils should publicise their activities, including those which are controversial. Clearly, that is essential to democratic accountability. In paragraph 158, the Committee draws attention to the

"very considerable value in greater communication by local government".

At present local authorities are empowered by section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 to publicise

"matters relating to local government."

Widdicombe considers that section 142 is

"an explicit recognition by Parliament—with which we would agree — that local authorities should be able to issue information on a broader range of issues than what is strictly necessary for their statutory functions."

That opinion appears in paragraph 135. The recommendation states:

"the scope of local authorities' general powers to issue publicity should be as currently set out in section 142 (section 88 in Scotland)".

There is no solace in that. It is fundamental to local government in the United Kingdom that councils are not merely the local administrative agents of central Government. Widdicombe endorses that view. One of the report's five underlying principles is:

"Local government is more than the sum of the particular services provided."

The Government have completely disregarded the committee's views.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The hon. Gentleman claims that we are disregarding or going beyond the Widdicombe recommendations. The critical clause in the report about party political material says:

"We wish to rule out such practices as"—

and it lists four such practices, one of which is

"publicity campaigns, the scale of which, given their political context, may have the effect of advancing the interests of a

particular party even though the subject matter is not overtly party political. An express prohibition of expenditure calculated to advance the interests of a political party could well have a moderating effect upon the scale and style of campaigns."
I do not think the hon. Gentleman's case is proven.

Dr. Cunningham: I am talking about Widdicombe's comments on what local authorities are empowered to do under section 142 of the 1972 Act, which was introduced by a Conservative Government. The Widdicombe report makes it clear that it sees a proper and legitimate role for local authorities in publicity. I say that the Government are disregarding the committee's views on that.

As part of its proposals for tidying up the legal powers, the committee recommends that section 137—containing the limited residual general power in the 1972 Act—should be amended to prevent authorities using it to finance publicity expenditure. Again, the Government have gone well beyond the report. Clause 3(2) would prevent any body funded under section 137 from issuing publicity unless the publicity was "incidental" to the main purpose of the body. That would stop the funding of voluntary organisations whose main aim often is publicity. For example, it might prevent the funding of an anti-drug campaign or anti-heroin publicity by voluntary organisations which were helped with their funding by a local authority.

In clause 4 the Government have decided to ignore the strongly expressed wish of the Widdicombe committee for a self-regulatory framework. Worse, they have pre-empted the decision to continue working on a solution to the problem.

I could continue with detailed criticisms of crucial parts of the Bill, but I think that I have made enough points to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Government have gone well beyond the Widdicombe interim report.

It is suggested and believed without thought by some Conservatives that these issues affect or have involved only Labour councils. How wrong they are. Conservative councils have fought hard and often bitter publicity campaigns on issues such as selective education. I think of Tameside, for example. Such activities would be banned by the legislation. Voluntary Action Westminster, funded partly by Tory Westminster city council and led by Lady Shirley Porter, has published material on the impact of the GLC's abolition on voluntary bodies. That would be banned by the Bill.

Fair Play for Children, the president of which is Archbishop Trevor Huddleston and which is funded in part by local authorities, publishes newsletters on, among other matters, the impact of Government cuts on play facilities. Such expenditure would be banned under the Bill.

Likewise, Tyne and Wear metropolitan county's "Save our Shipyards" campaigns to save Gartcosh steelworks — supported across the party political spectrum in Scotland—and campaigns on transport policy will be banned by the Bill. Community voices around Britain will be silenced.

The same might be true of campaigns involving information and advice on welfare rights, on co-operation with the police, cervical smear tests, contraception and even council house sales.

Councils will in general be unable to fund activities in areas where they have no function. That is what the Bill provides. If the Minister claims that what I am saying is wrong and that he intends to amend the Bill in Committee to make that clear, I shall be pleased. I hope that he will put that on the record, because it is not clear to the majority of legal opinion in local government.

Why is every local authority association opposed to the proposals? That is the acid test of the impact of the proposals on local authorities. I shall willingly give way to the Secretary of State if he intends to tell us that the Bill will be changed in Committee. He declines to intervene, and so concedes the argument that the catch-all provisions in clauses 2 and 3 will have that impact.

In addition, and ironically, Tory councils will not be able to finance campaigns for privatisation. Labour authorities will be unable to advise their electors why they oppose privatisation or even to publish their responses to a Green Paper.

Clause 2 will prevent publication of material critical of Government policy, while clause 3 forbids local authorities to publish material that is not directly related to their functions. Thus, councils of whatever political persuasion may not campaign against Government policy on wide-ranging issues such as nuclear waste disposal, the Channel tunnel or airport development unless they have specific functions related to them. That should make Conservative Members at least pause before they support these proposals as they stand.

What does "functions" in this context mean? It may be necessary for the Secretary of State for the Environment or for the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government to spell out in Committee in the minutest detail exactly what "functions" means in the context of this Bill, if these problems are to be overcome. We need an answer. I hope that the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government will be able to give that answer when he responds to this debate. District councils, for example, may be unable to campaign against or publish information which opposes the proposals or activities of the county council which administers services in their area — for example, education, social services or refuse disposal. What now of parish or village opposition to school closures, or to the loss of bus services? What now of that Goliath of community politics, the Liberal party, which apparently intends to support the Second Reading of this Bill? I wonder what the Association of Liberal Councillors will make of that.

The Local Government Act 1972 makes provision for parish polls. A poll must be held on any question that is raised at a parish meeting, if at least 10, or one third, of those present demand it. According to the Bill, a parish council could not act to publicise or campaign on the result of such a poll if it were an issue that was unconnected with parish functions. That is a measure of exactly how ludicrous these proposals are.

Will local authorities be able to campaign and appear at public inquiries against afforestation or the siting by water authorities of reservoirs in their area? As the Bill stands, this is not clear. Would council campaigns in schools to help the police be allowed by authorities that have no police authority function? There are surely enough examples already to raise major doubts about the advisability of what the Government are asking the House to agree. Ironically, the Bill seeks to erode powers given to local authorities by a Conservative Government in their Local Government Act 1972. Whatever has happened to the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)? Has he at last been silenced, too?

[Dr. Cunningham]

When it is returned to office, the Labour party will not just repeal these measures; it will enhance local government freedom by enacting a general power and competence which will allow all local authorities to act in the best interests of their communities.

We see again, in part III, the all too familiar Government habit of retrospective legislation, this time over mortgage sales by councils. Again, too, the Government are enforcing duties upon councils which do not apply to building societies. This is another example of the lack of even-handedness in this Government's approach to local authorities, such is their desire to control all aspects of the use by councils of their capital receipts.

It will be clear from what I have said that the Labour party is completely opposed to the central provisions of the Bill. Again, it exemplifies the deeply centralist and authoritarian nature of a Government who have had a dangerously corrupting influence upon public administration in Britain. There is the appointment of people according to the "one of us" syndrome—the promotion of people only if they suit the Prime Minister's proclivities. I suppose that the Secretary of State for the Environment is an example of the exception breaking the rule. At least I hope he is, but perhaps that is not a helpful thing to say about him so early in his career as a Cabinet Minister. There have been attacks on the independence of the Civil Service and repeated acts by Ministers have subsequently been ruled unlawful by the courts.

This Bill contains what is, by any test, a massive censorship of local opinion. The Government are planning a silent political spring in 1986. Local councils and communities will be permanently gagged by a Government who spend millions of pounds of taxpayers' money on propaganda. They will be gagged just at the time when about 23 million voters will have the chance to vote in local government elections. What a remarkable coincidence.

The timing of the Bill and its proposed implementation date, above all else, give away the intentions of this frightened Government. Elsewhere in Whitehall, election bribes are in preparation, but the Department of the Environment is leading the attack to silence the debate. The Bill is without precedent. It is contemptible. The House should reject it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): We got off to a late start and I see that 30 to 40 right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. Therefore, I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will try to make brief speeches.

5.56 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): This is a sad little Bill. It would have been unnecessary in the days of Herbert Morrison, or the founder of the Silkin dynasty or Bob Thomas of Manchester or during the long local government career of the father of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). No Labour leader would then have indulged in the kind of activity that has led to the introduction of this legislation. I support strongly what the hon. Member for Copeland has just said. If the Bill will prevent local authorities from spending money to promote privatisation, I shall be delighted, because that is not the function of local government.

In his closing remarks the hon. Gentleman said that he thought that the Bill was weak and that the courts had held that unlawful acts had been committed by Ministers. He will know that this applies to all Governments. May I remind the hon. Gentleman that Fred Mulley found himself on the wrong side of the courts on an education matter. The hon. Gentleman throws doubt upon the legal advice that is given to Ministers by their Departments under all Governments. This is happening far too often and needs to be examined very closely.

I welcome the Bill, as far as it goes. It is right for the House to accept that local government has a duty to administer Acts of Parliament as we pass them. I hope that this is not the last Local Government Bill that the Government will introduce. A clause needs to be added to the Bill making it clear beyond peradventure that it will be illegal for a local authority to spend money upon any function for which there is no statutory responsibility. This used to be the case before the local government law was changed. If one wanted to spend money for which there was no direct parliamentary authority, one went to the district auditor for a dispensation. That requirement ought to be reintroduced, though one should not have to go to the district auditor. I shall have a word to say about him later. However, the Government ought to make it clear that if there is no statutory responsibility there is no power under which money can be spent. I do not care whether posters, leaflets or preprinted cards are involved — anything that has a party political message must be caught by this legislation.

Throughout the country there have been the most blatant examples of why the Labour party does not need to spend a great deal of money on publicity. Its job is being done by Labour-controlled local authorities using the ratepayers' money. My right hon. Friend may say that the district auditor will look into that, but I believe him to be powerless.

There has been a great deal of nonsense this year involving GLC expenditure and activities, such as certain publications and posters over at county hall. Mr. Livingstone ratted on his deputy, Mr. John McDonnell. It is interesting to note that Livingstone was my opponent in Hampstead in 1979, and McDonnell in 1983. It is rather heartwarming to see thieves fall out. The tragedy is that they are falling out on ratepayers' money.

Mr. Allan Roberts *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall not give way as I am talking about London. I shall leave Merseyside to my colleagues——

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I shall not give way. Mr. Deputy Speaker has said that many hon. Members wish to speak, so I do not propose to give way.

What has happened in local government? The GLC and the rate-capped boroughs all claimed that services would be slashed. They claimed that old people's clubs and libraries would be closed and that refuse collection services were at risk. We now know the extent of the lie. My hon. Friend cited Islington, where even the staff could not stomach the lies that they were being asked to tell. We

know that the GLC is awash with money and that several hundreds of millions of pounds have been suddenly found. We all knew that the money existed, yet the GLC tried to argue that it could not fund its services.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider adding to the Bill a clause to stop the incestuous behaviour of Labour councillors. For example, why should the chairman of the social services committee of Hackney borough council suddenly have the job of director of Camden social services department? Why should a Brent Labour councillor become an employee of Camden borough council? Why should Mr. John McDonnell suddenly be thought the ideal person to receive £19,000 a year as policy adviser to Camden borough council?

Mr. Roberts *rose*——

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: No, I shall not give way. With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, if I were driven, as I might be, to be personal about him, I should, of course, give way. I do not propose to give way for any other reason. I say that clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you have requested brief speeches.

I am disturbed that I can find no penalty in the Bill should a local authority fail to set a rate by the due date. My right hon. Friend mentioned only the penalty of going through the courts. With great respect, however good the case of private individuals, they will not go to the courts. Equally, I do not believe that a district auditor reference is good enough. The Bill needs to be changed to include instant disqualification for those who fail to set a rate by the appropriate date.

I hope that when my hon. Friend replies to the debate he will assure us that there are some teeth in the Bill. The district auditor is useless, toothless and he vacillates. For example, Camden failed to set a rate by the due date. It sent a letter to every ratepayer, signed by the leader of the council, on council stationery and with council-paid postage. Even a 2-year-old child knows that that must be illegal expenditure. Had the rate been set by the appropriate date, there would have been no need for that. Despite four letters to the district auditor, he will not tell me whether he proposes to act. We must wonder whether he is a sleeper in more senses than one.

I wish to heed your request to be brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask my right hon. Friend to give further thought to the content of the Bill. I hope that he will say bluntly to his colleagues in Cabinet that, on reflection, he cannot expect the House to accept a Bill that does not make it automatically illegal to spend money on anti-nuclear zones, or that does not make it automatically illegal to spend money on anti-police activities, such as those conducted by the GLC, Camden and many other authorities, which have no statutory power to do so.

If my right hon. Friend is serious, as I believe him to be, he owes it to us to be forthcoming and to say, "Yes, I am satisfied that the House wants me to go further, and I shall do so when the Bill goes into Committee."

6.6 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): In almost every respect, this is a wretched Bill. I had thought that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) was going to accept that, having listened to his first sentence, but apparently he wants to make it even more wretched. He will have his work cut out because it is difficult to envisage how it could be made even more contemptible.

We all recognise the real origin of the Bill—it is the result of the debate in the House and the country during the past 12 months. Although the Government have a majority, they were defeated on almost all the arguments. They are still smarting from those defeats and, rather than take them in a sensible, proper and dignified manner, they are introducing this so-called Local Government Bill. It might better be called the GLC (Abolition) Sour Grapes Bill. Indeed, we might recall, in the light of the Secretary of State's Shakespearean knowledge, the words:

"I am sir Oracle,
And when I ope my lips let no dog bark"

So the Bill could be called the Let no Dog Bark Bill. Of all the Ministers who have risen to such eminence under this Government, he should have been the least willing to go along with those wishing to bring this Bill before the House.

If the right hon. Gentleman was seriously thinking of introducing measures to clear up the mess left by last year's legislation, he had plenty of opportunities to do so. Many local authorities are waiting for decisions from the Government. For example, there has been no sensible decision on the future of Hampstead heath, which is of great interest to many people throughout London. Ministers have been too eager to go ahead with this sort of Bill and have not applied their minds to important problems.

Nor have Ministers applied themselves to the financial aspects of local government generally or of this Bill in particular. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) gave figures in his reply to the debate on the Loyal Address showing what huge sums had been taken away from the inner cities. That action received no publicity but the small sums given by the Government machine were given great publicity.

Some of us do not qualify as representatives of inner city areas, but we are equally concerned about such transactions because we have to deal with the social and environmental consequences of 20 per cent. or more unemployment, which imposes a huge financial burden upon us. Far from the Government giving us assistance, they have been taking it away. In the Queen's Speech, the Government said that such transactions would continue.

Much publicity is given — the Government have plenty of facilities for doing so — to the expansion of youth development committees and youth training programmes. Under those programmes, the local authorities will pay most. As far as we can see, my constituency will contribute more to the youth development committee and the youth training scheme —an increase from £35,000 a year to £171,000—and more to the other training schemes — an increase of £7,000 to £58,000. We have checked this as much as we are able, and know that the total cost of youth training schemes will increase from £42,000 to £230,000 — an increase of £187,000. If that goes through, it will make a considerable difference to the rate that we can bring in, just when the local authorities are having to contend with exceptional problems.

My council and the councils in south Wales and the valleys have supported these schemes because we believe that it is essential to provide every form of assistance, even though it is not perfect. Any help for young people and

[Mr. Michael Foot]

those in training schemes should be supported. The Government have proposed that the local authorities contribute far more than central Government, but that is masked. Once the Bill is through, if the local authorities were to draw too much attention to this fact, they would no doubt fall foul of the Bill's provisions.

Instead of introducing this squalid little Bill, the Government should have seen the real economic and social consequences of the legislation that they have passed in the past year or two, and done something to improve the situation. Instead, we have this wretched little Bill, which is concerned solely with an attack on long-standing established local authority rights.

The Government could set up a committee to discuss the matter, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has proved, the Government could have waited. Why did they rush forward? Did the Minister go to the Legislation Committee and say that the Government must get ahead with this measure, and as speedily as possible? I doubt whether he would have wanted a Bill such as this. Who was the Minister pressing for this measure? I dare say that it was the previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whom we discovered today in his new incarnation. I bet that he was there saying: "The Government must get ahead with the Bill. Have you seen the available figures and dates? The Government must have the Bill to stop what many Labour and Liberal councils have been able to say in the past". The Government have rushed the Bill forward as their first Bill to be introduced this Session.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In his pronouncements on the Bill, is the right hon. Gentleman criticising the express prohibition that party political propaganda should not be financed out of public funds? Is he denying the part of the Bill that prohibits the conduct of a campaign that is likely to be partisan in its consequences?

Mr. Foot: If the House is to embark on fresh measures to restrain local authorities and other bodies in the terms in which they can properly engage in general propaganda, we should do it carefully, look at it properly, set up a Committee to examine it properly, and await the report of that Committee. The Government should not come along at the beginning of a Session and insist on rushing the Bill through before the whole report is available.

What is more, the Government should make sure that they will not deprive local authorities of the rights that the Government exercise themselves. I can give a concrete example of this. A little while ago, what Tory Members would no doubt call "a load of progaganda for party purposes" was published. It is Cmnd. 9474 called "Employment: The Challenge for The Nation". It costs £3·75 and is stuffed with the old monetarist nonsense. It claims that unemployment can be dealt with solely by Conservative methods. The whole document is a statement of Government policy, paid for by the taxpayer.

Suppose local authorities in my area, which have much more experience of these matters than the Government, wish to put their case about training schemes, or want to answer the Government's immediate statement and point out that, in carrying through their new training scheme —we are eager to do that—we shall bear the heaviest burden of cost. Suppose that those local authorities get together with others to try to put across our case. All such activity would be abrogated if the Bill goes through in the form in which the Secretary of State for the Environment has had the insolence to present it to the House.

Of all Governments in our history, no Government have such a subservient and sycophantic press as this. I do not like to involve the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley) in further difficulties, but he told the House much the same thing the other day, and he was right. The Government have the tamest press in modern British history. A whole range of newspapers, with few exceptions, are on their side. Occasionally, the Government get criticised by some local newspapers—that is why the Government want to get at them all the more. They want to stop the local authorities mobilising some of the local newspapers to put the case, as they often do, because they know the case much better than the editors of the *Daily Mail* or the *Daily Express* and the other trivial newspapers that try to pretend that they know something about the matter.

I know that Saatchi and Saatchi was paid by the Conservative party, but I see from the newspapers that it has now become the biggest propaganda organisation in the country. It has taken over many of the public relations firms and I dare say that it is still getting contracts from the Government. "Employment: The Challenge for The Nation", is printed in the Conservative colours and puts the Saatchi and Saatchi case, in some respects, even better than Saatchi and Saatchi could have done. That could have been the Government's motive.

There is one mistake to which I draw the attention of the House because I want to be fair. We have all been told by Government propaganda in every form that we must concentrate not on unemployment but on the employment figures. Every time a Minister speaks here or in the other place, that point is made. In the propaganda document put out by Conservative Central Office, page 7 tries to set out the matter. It says that of the 26·5 million in the labour force, over 23 million are in work and that this is not very different from the total in work 30 years ago. The Government hope that that will quieten people's anxieties and show that the number of people in employment is high.

On page 7 there is a chart, which the previous Secretary of State for Trade and Industry got in—perhaps that is why he has been demoted to another Department. Figure 5 shows how employment was higher in another period than it has been before or since. That period lasted for about a couple of years and employment rose to the highest ever level, on the Government's test. That was in 1978 and 1979 when, according to the posters paid for by the Conservative party, Labour was not working.

Some local authorities may wish to point out those obvious facts—the only part of the document that has given the game away—and reply to the rest of the document and the deluge of propaganda that pours out from the Government. Nobody knows better than the Secretary of State that the Government's and public institutions' use of publicity has increased enormously in modern times. Local authorities have increasingly engaged in that activity, and have won considerable respect from their communities by doing so. Of course, if they spread false and lying propaganda, as Saatchi and Saatchi did on behalf of the Conservative party in 1978 and 1979, eventually someone will come along and show, as

I have this afternoon, what a bunch of deliberate lies it is. That is free argument. That is what democracy and free debate are about in Britain.

The Government are trying to interfere with that process of reply. They can see that, in the next two or three years, local authorities, just as they have joined together to oppose this Bill, will try to present to the communities the truth about what is happening — mass unemployment, its social evils and the poison spreading throughout society.

The Government should be ashamed of the Bill, but nobody should be more ashamed than the Secretary of State, who earned his place in the team by deserting his views on local government with shameless persistence during the past two or three years. I quoted Shakespeare earlier, but I quote again for the Secretary of State:

"Thou hast it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis all . . . and, I fear, Thou play'dst most foully for't."

6.23 pm

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): I welcome the Bill and support the Government in bringing it forward. In the west midlands, we have been subjected to much political advertising, not least from the West Midlands metropolitan county council. This has especially been the case in respect of the transport function. Much fear has been put into old-age pensioners about the prospects for their bus passes. There have been slogans on all our buses, many of them tendentious and unwarranted, but doubtless expensive. We even had the Prime Minister carried in effigy on a lorry. That misfired in Solihull high street, because people raised their hats as it went by.

The Bill's opponents have two basic misconceptions. Some have misunderstood in good faith, others much less so. The first is to confuse persuasion about policy — which is not on — with information about function and operation. The Government are following the Widdicombe report by saying that information about function and operation is permissible, but that endeavours to indulge in propaganda to persuade people about policy is not. The Bill is faithful to the provisional findings of the Widdicombe inquiry on that point.

The second misunderstanding is to perceive local authorities as parliaments writ miniature, with a general mandate from their electorates to engage in general discussion and opinion-forming on the widest possible range of subjects of their choosing. They are not. Local authorities — local government is a misnomer — are creatures of statute. They were put in place by statute — by Parliament — and they exist to discharge statutory functions. They are administrative, not governing, entities. Having said that, I readily concede that elected councillors have available a range of discretions within the statutory framework, and a good councillor does well to exercise those discretions as he believes is most suitable for his area, the community and the people. He should exercise those discretions within the framework, but not exceed those discretions or go outside the framework.

I do not come newly to the analysis that I have just expressed, nor do I come to it as one who was relatively recently privileged to be elected to the House. I held exactly the same view trenchantly for about 14 years as an elected councillor. The conclusion of my views on the Bill is as follows: first, that the so-called date for a rate provision commends itself to the House, because the alternative is confusion, danger and uncontrolled expense; and, secondly, that the propaganda rules, the code of practice and the accounting requirements will win the enthusiastic support of Conservative Members.

I am glad that the Government have introduced this measure. I support it, and I know that my constituents support it, too.

6.27 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I, too, welcome the Secretary of State and his colleagues to their new positions. With the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), I wish them slightly better prospects than their predecessors had in political terms, although I share the fear of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that our expectations will not be fulfilled.

The setting up of the Widdicombe inquiry under the previous Secretary of State was welcomed by the Liberal party, as by other parties. The interim report published during the summer was also largely welcomed. The tragedy is that the Government did not heed the suggestion in the report that this Bill should reform the law, not add new restrictions. That will no doubt be the theme of deliberations in Committee.

The Government do not appear to have accepted a view that was pre-eminent in the inquiry's interim report — that local authorities are institutions which, in our constitution, are important and deserve to be upheld when performing their proper functions. The hon. Member for Copeland referred to the Liberal party as the party of community politicians. The Liberal party was given that name because it supported community-based politics, which is represented by the best areas of local government.

The Bill should deal with a clear abuse that I shall mention later, and at the same time enhance local government and the voluntary sector, upon which so many people rely. The tragedy is that, having understood the principle, the Government let it slip and have gone too far. Of course, there is an easy solution which I have already suggested to Ministers. None of the worst abuses would happen if they were brave enough to accept proportional representation in local government. A simple one-clause Bill would have remedied all the defects. But they are slow to learn and no doubt a measure such as that has to wait until later in the learning curve.

The Secretary of State's predecessor tried to take on local government and in the end was defeated by it. He could not deliver the goods. I hope that the present Secretary of State will now pay heed to the warnings of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and others and not give himself into the hands of the megalomaniacs of Marsham street and go OTT — which, he will appreciate, stands for "over the top".

I come to this debate from what can only be described as personal experience, and I admit to sharing to some extent a prejudiced viewpoint, as would anyone who, like me, has been resident for some years in the London borough of Southwark under increasingly Left-wing control — *[Interruption.]* — elected with 44 per cent. of the vote, although with 54 out of 64 seats.

The local authority there has often grossly disregarded the concerns of the people by spending money on publicity of a self-serving nature — money which people wanted spent on other things which would have been more useful to them, such as housing repairs, old people's homes and more adding to school provision by the education

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

authority. The boroughs in my part of south London, together with Liverpool, are the principal reasons for this measure.

"Islington cares" is still the poster there—I was in the area yesterday—and goes on "care for Islington", although that should be an unnecessary exhortation. The authority should gain support by what it does rather than by what it says. Lambeth's £1,000 a day spent on publicity is excessive when there is so much else that the local citizens need.

Southwark's expenditure on its monthly newspaper, *The Sparrow*, is, I understand, in the Labour party's draft manifesto for 1986, to be increased to a weekly newspaper, no doubt planned to have as many pictures of Labour councillors and as few of other party councillors as there are now. When local ratepayers are asked implicitly to spend £30,000 on a youth festival—which, for those who attend, is primarily a recruiting ground for *Militant*, *Socialist Worker* and the Labour party; I have written to the district auditor on the subject — they rightly complain.

We must consider such abuses. My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright), who is the SDP spokesman on this matter, has had the same experience in Greenwich. Those abuses have caused the Bill to be produced.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Where is he?

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is attending a meeting, but will join the debate later. In any event, he is happy to leave this point with me because the experience is similar in both boroughs.

I want the Government to listen to the people in the know, who have made some important comments since the publication of the Bill. I want them to ensure that local government is not abused by over-reaction. While the Bill is intended to deal with abuse, the danger is that the Government will abuse local government in the result. We should seek to achieve a Bill, the sole effect of which is to ensure that abuses committed by a small minority of local authorities, which have given local government in some areas a bad name, are prevented.

The blame does not, however, lie entirely with local government. Since 1979, as this centralist Government have sought increasingly to blame local authorities and impose more central controls on them, they have tempted local authorities to fight back. By trying to throttle local government, this Government have induced abuse. The Government must take their share of the responsibility for that.

Parts III and IV of the Bill deal with finance. Part IV is a technicality, and we accept what is a good and short provision, while part III, which suggests that the consent of every mortgagor must be required to the transfer of a local authority mortgage out of local authority control, is impracticable. Although that provision might be fine in theory, it is not even fine in principle because, for example, private tenants are not asked for their consent when their landlords change. Although the Building Societies Association says that it might like such a provision, I understand that it agrees that there will be difficulties in practice. We appreciate that the provision is in the Bill to stop capital spending—to block a way that local authorities found to increase their money—but we hope that it will be deleted.

Clause 1, which is concerned with setting a rate by 1 April, though already existing in Scotland, is a something and nothing. It says that a rate shall be fixed by 1 April, but goes on, in subsection (3), to say that the provision "shall not be construed as invalidating a rate made . . . after 1st April".

Some councils will try to set a rate and not agree. They may try to fulfil their duty and not succeed. That may happen with one-party or multi-party councils. The district auditor, in all areas which have district auditors, has power to deal with the issue, and the Widdicombe inquiry is also charged with examining the matter. It would be better to wait for the full report, and then select a speedy remedy if there is unreasonable delay.

One solution may be to have an earlier rate support grant. Another, as the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) said, may be to strengthen the hand of district auditors, who often appear to be slow or toothless tigers. Indeed, I am waiting for complaints to my district auditor to be dealt with. The Widdicombe inquiry may suggest ways of strengthening their control. The Audit Commission is excused from that rebuke because it is accepted generally that it has been an impartial critic of central Government and a friend to local government.

Part II of the Bill contains the central provision. It is right to have a separate account for local authority publicity, although I am intrigued to find that the Government do not have a similar separate account nationally. I raised that matter in written questions answered today.

There is all-party agreement, at any rate in the House, about out attitude to publicity of a party political nature, and I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Copeland remind the House that that view had been given in the Labour party's submission of evidence. Clearly, the same view is not held in some Labour local authorities. But what the Labour party says centrally and what happens locally are often far apart.

I urge the Government not to go beyond the principles in part II and trespass on other rights and responsibilities of local government. Clause 2(1)(*b*), clause 3(1) and clause 4 are appalling and extreme. Clause 4 is horrendous in that it allows the Secretary of State to issue different codes to different local authorities at his discretion. If that is not arbitrary, nothing is. That provision should be swept from the Bill at the earliest opportunity.

Clause 2(3) is dangerous because it threatens the integrity, campaigning ability and usefulness of voluntary bodies. That, too, should go. Where there is party political unanimity, as there is on a body such as the Association of County Councils, which is of the view that sections 142 and 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 should not be amended, that view should be accepted. Indeed, I urge the Minister to go further and say that whenever all parties on a local authority agree on a matter of publicity—they often have on questions such as abolition — that campaigning should be allowed to continue.

Many good suggestions have been made in the few days since the Bill was published. We expect the Government to respond intelligently and responsibly to them in Committee. They must not brush them aside, as they did with much of the expert evidence in respect of the Local Government Bill in the last Session.

It is clear from a detailed examination of clause 2 and its extension of the Widdicombe proposals that much of that provision will be not only a legislative minefield but unenforceable. People want quick remedies, but that provision as presently drafted will involve a long procedure through the courts.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, in his written answer today, told me that, in the last calendar year, the running costs of his Department's information directorate were £2,887,000, including the cost of paid publicity. If we want to limit publicity by local government, it is about time we considered how to limit publicity by public corporations, such as the London Docklands Development Corporation, and by Departments, too. Such expenditure is often party political as well.

The alliance believes that the principle of legislating to prevent local government from funding party political advertising should be accepted. If the Government hold to their present intention of going further and do not return to the principles of the Widdicombe interim report—we agree entirely with Mr. Newsam's memorandum—their support for the principle will be seen to be as prejudiced and subjective as the practices that the Government seek to prohibit.

Constructive and coherent amendments will be made in Committee. We shall make it clear what the Bill should look like. I hope that the Government will think again about the wisdom of appointing a Committee—all-party and no party—and then not taking the benefit of its advice. To over-react will be extremely damaging. We ask the Government to legislate for the principle but to cease to over-react because of their prejudices.

6.41 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): All hon. Members will wait with enjoyment to see the way in which alliance Members will go. There must be a kernel of truth in the Government's case and little to be said on the Opposition side if this "vital matter of principle", as the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) would have it, is supported by only half a dozen Opposition Members.

The heart of the problem lies in the Widdicombe interim report, on pages 24 and 25, which clearly spell out that there are many constraints on the abuse of powers by local councils. In a give-away sentence, the report says: "it is to be expected that these constraints will become better understood and will increasingly act as a moderating influence on local authorities."

Some hope! The constraints are well known, especially by local authorities. They have not had any moderating influence—to the contrary. Some local authorities have done their best to avoid those constraints. Many of the hard Left-controlled urban councils have no intention of abiding by the various controls.

It is essential to ensure that local authorities spend money on publicity relating to their functions. It is essential to provide a code that establishes what is proper in terms of style and content. One must ask, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), whether the code is to be effectively enforceable. It is essential that local authorities have identifiable budgets for their publicity spending.

There is no doubt that the public need to be more aware of the abuse by councils of funds for political campaigning, both directly and indirectly. Throughout Britain, including cities such as Leeds, there is not, as the hon. Member for Copeland said, a denial of minority views and a Government insistence on the establishment of their views but an attempt to enforce minority views on the rest.

The rate-capping campaign in Leeds has spent well over £100,000 directly and £60,000 has gone on "peace" activities. In addition, there are indirect subsidies and covert help. The leisure services department is used to make videos and the sports halls and other facilities are used free for campaigning. The public works department provides free scaffolding for campaigning groups. There are exhibitions of the council's activities and services which the council pretends are under threat by the Government. All these activities form indirect help for the council's direct political campaigning against the Government.

That is the direct spending by Leeds council—some of it is visible; some is not. In addition, there is the funding of the so-called voluntary bodies, which Labour Members have admitted are campaigning bodies. They too campaign against Government measures. They are sympathetic to the prevailing party in the council. That money does not go generously to help the public debate and to enhance public democracy, as Labour Members say—it often directly denies democracy. The political power of the majority caucus is being used to stifle public and democratic debate.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that, if a voluntary body goes out of existence because of Government measures—for example, when Tyne and Wear metropolitan county council is abolished—that voluntary body has every right to tell the people why it will not be able to provide the same services that it provided in the past? Surely there is nothing wrong with that. However, under the Bill, it would be considered wrong.

Dr. Hampson: I am talking not about the funding of proper voluntary bodies, of which there are many, but about the hijacking of ratepayers' money so that it is fed to narrow partisan campaigning groups. That is insidious.

The published estimate of the cost of the "Leeds and the Bomb" pamphlets was £5,000 for publishing, but they were written in-house and there was no estimate of what that cost. Then there is the money which is being put into bodies that are not really voluntary organisations but are professional campaigning groups. If they were really voluntary, they would go out on to the streets to raise money, like charitable bodies. But their views are of such a minority kind that they would not stand a cat in hell's chance of getting off the ground but for the money from a politically biased council that enables them to hire professional staff. These groups have professional campaigning staff who are paid at the expense of local ratepayers.

Leeds city council spends a large amount on its campaigns. Indirect help is given to many groups. This includes money for Left-wing newspapers and £30,000 for the trade union and community resources centre, some of which was passed on to the "Troops out of Northern Ireland" campaign. The time and effort of local government department officials are used on behalf of anti-Government campaigns.

Perhaps the most insidious activity is the waving of Labour party cards by applicants for council jobs. There

[Dr. Hampson]

was the case of the assistant director of further education whose life was made so difficult that he resigned and went to another county. His replacement seems to be a blatant political appointment. He is the husband of a Labour county councillor. His promotion has been so rapid that he did not have time to take up his previous post of principal of a college of further education before he was promoted yet again. A £19,000 post for the new health services unit was advertised in blatant political terms in only a certain number of publications, including *The Guardian*. The person appointed is well known in the city as a sympathiser of the Left on the city council.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): My hon. Friend referred to where the posts are advertised. Is he aware that many Labour authorities advertise all the posts in *Labour Weekly*? It is therefore hardly surprising that the applicants arrive waving their Labour party membership cards.

Dr. Hampson: That is another example of what I call indirect assistance being given to Left-wing propaganda journals, newspapers and periodicals by the placing of advertisements which are of no value but which contribute to the revenue of those periodicals.

In Leeds there is increasing comment about the leader of the Labour group's so-called "Red Star" system. When shortlists for council posts are drawn up, red stars are put against those who are sympathetic to the Labour group's views and are therefore suitable to be considered for the post. That is a sad comment on the leader of the Labour group whose image is moderate, sensible and reasonable. Either he has become a pawn of the Left, or he is a more subtle politician of the Left than his image has so far conveyed. The Labour group will do nothing to support the Government's initiative on the city action teams or the campaign some of us tried to get over for Leeds. On the one hand, it is intensively partisan in the way that it handles some of its expenditure, but if there is money coming from the Thatcher Government, the group will not touch it.

Leeds has lost money that could have been used in the city on training and vocational education. The Open University was given money by the Department of Education and Science for an adult counselling scheme. That was first approved and then rejected in August by a council committee. Regional Manpower Services Commission money was rejected because it seemed to the Labour group that it was taking money from a Conservative Government whom it does not like. That is partisanship gone mad and totally to the detriment of the interests of the people of Leeds. It does not show the sense of responsibility that is expected from leading councillors in one of the great cities of the land.

There have been stories of the chairman of one of the council's sub-committees opening the mail of the deputy officer of the sub-committee. The Labour group is worried about the partisanship of the council officers. The great tradition that council officers should be bipartisan and serve all councillors is being replaced by a feeling that they should be at the service of the majority party.

One Labour supporter is so fed up with, or to use the word of the hon. Member for Copeland "disgusted" by, this growing practice that he has even told me that the council leader, George Mudie, has said that he will make the education director's life impossible. I have not checked that with the officer because I did not wish to place him in the embarrassing position of being accused of giving me the information when he did not. The standards in some of our great cities are deteriorating.

It is a tragedy of misinformation and abuse of which the public are not aware. The Government's intentions in this Bill touch only the tip of the iceberg. They are not to stifle democracy and head off local democratic debate, which is the charge from the Labour Front Bench, but to ensure that the public know what is happening and that democracy prevails.

6.52 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen): The public must be wondering why we are spending today discussing this piece of nonsense when we have 5 million people unemployed, housing deprivation in the inner city areas, hospital closures, the education service in tatters, and social security cuts. The reality, and the more sinister implication of the Government's action, is that next year in the battle over rate support grant the Government will be taking other local authorities down the road that they have taken Liverpool, in an attempt to stifle proper democratic discussion and debate. The Government are seeking to muzzle local authorities for telling the truth about the Government's intentions.

Why do we need the Bill? The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that the district auditor is a "toothless tiger", but in Liverpool that so-called "toothless tiger" is judge, jury and executioner. He is self-appointed and, as the Secretary of State said today, he is unanswerable to Parliament. He comes in, does his business and surcharges the council in Liverpool. Ultimately he has the power to throw council members into gaol. We have that fallback position. Liverpool's situation, to which the Minister refers time and again, is partly of the Government's making. That is evident in some of the reporting of the crisis in Liverpool.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) referred to the former Secretary of State for the Environment who sent a letter to John Hamilton, the leader of Liverpool city council. In it he said:

> "I very much hope we can develop an effective and constructive partnership to tackle the needs of the people of Liverpool. . . . I can give you an assurance that I will do my very best to ensure that allocations to Liverpool next year under the Housing Investment Programme and the Urban Programme, taken together, will enable the Council to make positive progress in dealing with the City's severe needs".

The Government go running to the papers with those statements. Despite all the statements from the Front Bench, instead of an injection of cash, since 1979 Liverpool has had £170 million in rate support grant removed, £24 million of further education grants removed, £69 million of housing subsidy removed and £96 million of housing investment programme removed.

In an attempt to tell the truth to the people of Liverpool, the council sent a notification to every household. It is now being muzzled and prevented from carrying out its democratic rights.

The background to the deprivation that is occurring in Liverpool has been repeated many times in the House. The Secretary of State referred to the Stonefrost report and used it to back up his arguments this afternoon. Misinformation

always comes from the Government, and the Secretary of State did not mention that the Stonefrost report eloquently said that the problems affecting Liverpool were

"The Tory Government's politically biased rate support grant penalty system".

and

"The inherited problems from the previous Liberal/Tory administration".

We put out the facts on "Liverpool: a Socialist Council" headed paper to try to tell the truth to the people, because the Government are lying to the people of Liverpool affected by their draconian measures.

What is happening in Liverpool is the result of Government measures—the savage cuts in the money which is badly needed in cities such as Liverpool. Inevitably, the weak link gave way, and that is what has happened in Liverpool. It is a horror story of crimes committed by the Government.

We must remind people and tell them the truth about what is happening, because the Government are clearly not prepared to tell the truth about the 65,000 people who have lost their jobs since they have been in office, the 40,000 jobs that have been lost from the private sector and the 22,000 people on the housing waiting list. The public should know all that, but it is information to which the Government, with all their distortions and lies, are denying them access.

Stonefrost did not only propose a 15 per cent. rate increase, as the Secretary of State alleged. The report said that other measures would be necessary. Some were contained in a document from the Liverpool city treasurer. The Stonefrost report calls him a man of integrity and honour. Stonefrost does not suggest that the game would be over with a 15 per cent. rate increase. Capitalisation destroys the possibility of hundreds of people obtaining homes and means rent rises in excess of £6·50 into the bargain. That is the reality.

Mr. Tony Banks: I hope that my hon. Friend will accept from me that Maurice Stonefrost, who is the director general of the Greater London council, is a skilful local authority bureaucrat and a completely loyal staff member at County hall. He can only put forward officers' views. He would understand, better than anyone else, that it is the politicians, including those on Liverpool council, who must make political decisions, not the bureaucrats.

Mr. Fields: That is correct. Hard decisions must be made and places such as Liverpool must wrestle with their problems to resolve them. We pay due regard to that. Nevertheless, it means that this Government, in setting the date as 1 April, make no allowance at all. The Secretary of State talked about it being physically impossible. For Liverpool city council, it is physically impossible to jack up the rates and rents, sack workers and stop building the houses that 22,000 people desperately need.

A propaganda war is currently taking place, and while we need some of the leaflets and publicity put out, we also have to explain to workers the hypocrisy of Tory Members. Those hon. Members and their friends in Fleet street, the five press barons who control practically the whole national press, spew out their lies and propaganda against the interests of ordinary working people. The so-called Labour paper edited and controlled by Maxwell is no friend of Liverpool or working people either. The responsibility for the problems we are facing rests fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the Government.

What the Secretary of State said underlines the case we have made repeatedly. He will not meet the city council, nor has he done so during his term of office. He has never set foot in Liverpool to see the scenes and the holocaust for which his Government are responsible. Liverpool will not go away. In their impertinence, Government Members believe that, with the passing of this Bill, Liverpool will ultimately go away. It will not go away, and even at this late stage I urge the Minister to meet the city councillors and thrash out the problem that is facing the people of Liverpool.

During the discussions in this House over the last few days, people have attempted to give us a history lesson, contrasting, for example, George Lansbury with Derek Hatton, Comrade Bernie Grant and Ted Knight. But those hon. Members do not tell the whole story, because Lansbury and the Poplar councillors went to gaol for their beliefs. That will happen to Hatton and company in Liverpool for their opposition to this Government, and they will be going to gaol on behalf of decent people who need the houses, jobs and proper services that this Government are denying. *[Laughter.]* The Minister may laugh, but he will be laughing on the other side of his face in a short time, because the people of Liverpool will see through the dishonesty and disgusting attitudes of this Government. Lansbury went to gaol and men and women in Poplar went to gaol and changed the law. Liverpool will battle with other local authorities which next year will be in Liverpool's position. We will battle not only to change the law, but to bring down this Government and to free Liverpool people and working people nationally from the absolute horror story of this Thatcher Government.

7.4 pm

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): As my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) has already said, this Bill is a product of its time. Ten years ago the House would not have needed to consider a measure of this sort. Since then, the nature of local government in this country, particularly in London, has changed completely. This change is exemplified nowhere more clearly than in the affairs of the GLC since 1981. Other local authorities both in and outside London—Lambeth, Hackney, Camden, Liverpool, and so on—are following the path that the GLC has beaten.

I am the only Conservative Member of Parliament who is still a serving member of the GLC and many of my constituents work in London. I welcome the fact that the GLC is to be abolished, but, even after abolition, the effects of GLC mismanagement of ratepayers' money will live on. We need to return local government to its proper functions, and to do that we must identify what has happened outside those functions.

The GLC has attracted much press attention since Labour took control in 1981. We are all familiar with the self-publicising of its leader, Ken Livingstone. However, much of its activity has received scant publicity, partly because the functions of the GLC are few and in the main impinge very little upon the day-to-day life of most Londoners. It is also because such press coverage as there has been has centred upon the more absurd Labour actions. Grants to groups such as Babies Against the Bomb have been ridiculed, and others, to the Liberation Movement for Colonial Freedom, for instance, have been portrayed as

[Mrs. Marion Roe]

occasional aberrations in favour of pet Left-wing causes. They are, in fact, somewhat colourful decorations on what is a more substantial cake.

The Labour Left did not set out to take control of the Greater London council in order to preside over waste disposal, the fire service or the creation of the Thames flood barrier, and have the odd foray into the patronage of fringe elements. It saw the GLC as far more. It saw it as a vehicle to begin to change society, principally by acting as a large, publicly funded pressure group. At the same time, the GLC could act as a blueprint for a future Labour Government, both at national and local level. Before the elections of 1981, Ken Livingstone announced:

"Wherever there is an industrial dispute in London, we shall go down and support it . . . we will use the whole structure of the GLC to support trade unionists in struggle throughout London . . . and work with the trade unions to try to bring this Government down ahead of its time."

No one can argue that the interests of local government are served by such remarks. All they show is contempt for the democratic process. That was emphasised by Ken Livingstone in a letter to committee chairmen on 2 April 1985:

"It is basic GLC policy that London and Londoners need more control over their lives, not less."

The activities of the Labour group over the last four years give a clear picture of what that control means. Two areas of activity serve to illustrate both Labour's objectives and the extraordinary use of ratepayers' money to further their cause nationally. The first is in the use of grant-aid to other bodies, both local authorities and self-appointed groups, and the second is in the development of industrial and financial policy beyond the notional scope of local government activity.

To Labour in London, local government is no longer about the administration of local services for the benefit of all. It is about acquiring a political power base, and the ratepayers' money that goes with it, to promote its own vision of society. Any discussion of recent difficulties between national and local government ignores this development at its peril. One element of the grants policy adopted by the Labour GLC since 1981 was the creation of a police committee—despite the fact that the GLC has no responsibility for policing in London. The police committee met for the first time on 13 July 1981, with the following terms of reference:

"Matters relating to the policing of Greater London, law enforcement and public order therein, including links with other bodies concerned."

In 1982-83 it had a budget of £848,000. By 1985-86 this had risen to £2,904,000. The majority of that money was used as grant-aid to 49 organisations throughout London. Despite the tone of the publicity which these grants have generated, the policy has not been to award aid in a random way to vague Left-wing causes. Grants were used to set up a network of groups which propagate the views of the London Labour party and simultaneously act to undermine public confidence in the police.

The main instruments for this have been the police monitoring groups. There are 21 of these self-appointed groups, operating in London, all funded primarily by the GLC and, on occasions, actively seeking grants from Labour-controlled borough councils as well. By 2 July 1985, the GLC had awarded these groups grants totalling £2,080,623—£23,000 more than the Labour party spent nationally at the last general election.

The theme of the GLC pronouncements is always the same—the so-called "democratic accountability" of the police, as enshrined by the GLC and now the Labour party. Support for the police is totally non-existent. The groups collect information about policing in their areas, concentrating in particular on complaints against policing strategy and individual police officers. Each group relays the information to the support unit of the GLC police committee. The groups shun official methods of dealing with the police. Nothing that they do in any way helps to tackle crime. Most of their actions simply make policing an even more difficult job than it is anyway.

The creation of a large network of activists, paid out of public funds, is a new development within the sphere of local government. It constitutes a new use of money spent under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, and serious questions are raised by that activity. It demonstrates that the section is now being used to fund activities outside the proper sphere of local government, and is being improperly used to reward or secure party political support.

Equally worrying has been the publication of the "London Industrial Strategy." It is a book of 633 pages, it covers 21 sections of the economy and is in general beyond the bounds of the GLC's competence throughout. Each chapter, covering a different industry, was assembled from the conclusions of several papers. Each includes a summary of its contents and a series of recommendations for action, many of which are well beyond the responsibilities of the GLC.

Taken as a whole, the strategy represents a model of a Department of Trade and Industry/Department of Employment policy that would be followed by a Left-wing Labour Government, and the work done on it has been financed by the ratepayer. One example serves to give the flavour of the document. The chapter dealing with vehicle manufacture is nothing but an attack upon the Ford Motor Company. Left-wing hostility to multinational companies is commonplace, but the GLC, with its huge resources and potential influence, represents a more considerable threat. Certainly nothing in the strategy would do anything for jobs in the industry. The GLC sums up its objectives by saying that to curb a powerful multinational, such as Ford, will require both direct action by workers and a range of Government interventions at national and European levels.

The GLC plans to provide resources and facilities for international meetings of Ford workers and trade unions, and the first steps have already been taken. A conference for trade union representatives from Ford plants throughout Europe and Brazil took place in Eastbourne in February 1984. That conference was supported by the GLC. Where does all that fit into the proper activities of local government? The GLC itself was not always so sure and frequently had to employ counsel to find out. By 26 June 1984 the GLC had spent £125,925 for that purpose alone since its election, and the chairman of the legal and general committee admitted that the GLC had not yet been charged for a further 25 per cent. of the work commissioned. One is left with the impression that the Labour GLC deliberately set out to use ratepayers' money to create a Left-wing national policy.

Most worrying was the production of a series of papers from the GLC on the theme of the food industry, which

appeared some time before a pamphlet on the same themes was published by the Labour party headquarters at Walworth road. It is hard to believe that the two were not connected.

Abolition of the GLC will make no difference to the work that has already been done and still continues at County hall. A steady quantity of labour "policies in waiting" has emerged from County hall. It will be interesting to see how many resurface in the next Labour party general election manifesto. A substantial amount of political work has been done at ratepayers' expense, and there can be no doubt that it has been beyond the boundaries of local government responsibility.

If local government is to maintain its proper functions and the respect of ratepayers, much of the ostentatious political activity associated with London councils needs to be removed from the sphere of local services. The Bill will assist to do just that. Councils do not exist to provide minority activists with a platform to play politics with other people's lives. People have a right to see their rates used for the proper purpose—services that benefit all.

7.15 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): It is very sad that once again the House is debating local government democracy, or the demise of it, and further restrictions on local government and decision-making. The Government are yet again bringing in further control and restriction on very important matters on which I shall speak later.

I am worried about the Government's haste. They have decided to rush through the Bill to silence local authorities and many other groups which dare to have an alternative view, or to express concern. I assume that the Government have chosen the present time because they feel that they will not particularly like the outcome of the Widdicombe inquiry. I assume that the Secretary of State has already had a sniff of it and feels that something should be done before the full report is available to the general public and this House.

The inquiry and the findings so far have established some very important facts. As was said earlier, it is felt that the total spending on publicity by local authorities is a very small amount, and that the amount spent on so-called controversial political matters is even smaller. There is no substantial evidence of public concern on the issue of publicity.

It has been agreed that persuasion is not unlawful as long as it is consequential to the publication of information. It is well known that there are considerable legal constraints on local authorities regarding advertising, particularly on the question of what is political propaganda and advertising. It is significant that the inquiry report contained no single example of party political advertising being exploited by local authorities.

It has been accepted in principle that local authorities may publicise matters of political controversy, provided that the material issued is in the interests of a local authority itself. There is little doubt that local authorities are in a much better position than central Government to decide on the right level of their publicity.

Local authorities have made valuable contributions on wider policy matters than those strictly related to their statutory functions. How can the Government argue for more democracy, more freedom and more open Government, and yet at the same time introduce the Bill, which is a further restriction on local government, dictating to local authorities what publicity they can use and for what purpose? It must be right for local authorities to extend their communication to the electorate rather than to restrict it.

It has often been said that the present public perception of services in local government leaves a lot to be desired. Surely publicity from local authorities can bridge the gap and encourage more people to take an active part and interest in local affairs.

The Bill runs straight into the face of the current understanding of what we mean by greater participation by a greater number of people in our democratic structure. The Bill will create even more imbalance between the powers of local and central Government. Many people fear this part of the Bill on the ground that sooner or later central dictation will rule supreme, with little or no opposition from anywhere within the United Kingdom.

Many groups will be affected and feel restricted. I am certain that local newspapers and, indeed, national newspapers will feel that the restrictions go too far. Indeed in another country, under another regime, the only newspaper that would find this Bill attractive would be *Pravda*.

Even now, local authorities spend a very small amount of their budgets on publicity and many people, at least in my area, wish it were more. On the other side of the equation the Government, on their own admission, have spent £2·75 million of taxpayers' money on publicity stunts for their own policies on abolition, rate capping and the sale of council houses. Where is the justification for that? What is good for one is apparently bad for the other. Is it because Big Brother or, in this case, Big Sister knows best?

This Bill creates further minefields of chaos and absurdities in the relationship between central and local government. Who decides what publicity is necessary and indeed useful? Who decides whether councils or voluntary services should inform the public about the effect of local expenditure restrictions imposed by the Government? Will local authorities be allowed to publish information on welfare rights and guidance to the public on complaints procedures? Will local authorities be able to inform the public of the likely effects of the Transport Bill? Will it be illegal for social services and local authorities or voluntary groups funded by local authorities to run campaigns against drug abuse, to remind people of the importance of making surgical smears or indeed to explain to the public what local authorities are trying to do to sustain and create new job opportunities in areas of high unemployment?

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if a political party wishes to promote its beliefs it is perfectly free to do so provided that it raises the funds from its own activities? What we are trying to prevent in this Bill is the use of taxation—ratepayers' money — for party political use. We argue that a political party should use its own funds to promote its own views.

Mr. Michie: I am sorry that I gave way.

Mr. Forth: I bet the hon. Gentleman is.

Mr. Michie: I am wasting my time. Parties raise funds for their own political propaganda. I am talking about information given to the public through the city council

[Mr. Michie]

machinery. If we spent as much money as the Government spend on their propaganda, they would have something to grouse about. Local authorities and other bodies can give much information that is useful to the public.

In my constituency we have 18 to 22 per cent.—and rising—unemployment. Male unemployment is now 19 to 22 per cent. in Sheffield. That is unprecedented. It must be right for local authorities to try to help people in their desperate need to find jobs and to inform the public that the city council is aware of their situation and is trying its best to alleviate unemployment as far as possible.

Many projects and publicity campaigns have lifted morale and raised the level of public interest. Many of those campaigns have been, and still are being, considered by various Government Departments.

When the location of the Community trade mark office was being considered by the EC and the Government, in the full knowledge that the Government felt that the office should be in London, the people of Sheffield decided on a campaign for the office to be in Sheffield. This was not just a campaign by the Labour-controlled local authority —it was promoted jointly by the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire, Sheffield city council, Sheffield chamber of commerce, the university of Sheffield, the Assay Office, the Sheffield city polytechnic, Sheffield Members of Parliament and members of the European Parliament. Are we saying that such joint ventures will in future be scrutinised by the Government and be rendered illegal by the Bill? What about publicity to help or advise unemployed young people?

There have been highly successful publicity campaigns —with political overtones maybe—encouraging young people to join groups and unemployed centres and to have a much more constructive time rather than sitting about at home. Such activity has raised their level of interest and their optimism while a real job is being made available. Moreover, such action helps to take pressure off inner city services and raises the aspirations of many young people.

The Secretary of State for the Environment is studying an employment and environmental plan for the lower Don valley, Sheffield, which is the product of many years of work involving communications and publicity drawing together the public, trade and industry. The information gathered and published in the pamphlet "From the Ashes" is invaluable for the Government and should be recognised as such. It should not be regarded as a threat because it was inspired by the city council.

It is well understood that the Bill will affect all councils —not just Labour-controlled ones—that get off their backsides and try to fight for their areas and the people they represent. The main line electrification campaign, which was launched in Sheffield, was signed not by the leader of Sheffield city council alone—the leader of the Conservative opposition also signed it. It has the support and/or financial backing of 17 local authorities, including six Conservative-controlled ones—Bedfordshire county council, Charnwood district council, Kettering borough council, Leicestershire county council, Northampton county council and Wellingborough county council. I can imagine the Government's political inspector having a difficult job justifying an attack on such a publicity campaign for being political when the campaign is directed merely at trying to get the Government to do something.

This is a bad Bill. I cannot put it much better than the Sheffield *Morning Telegraph*. A headline in that newspaper of Saturday 9 November proclaimed:

"Bill Bears Hallmarks of Bad Law".

The paper made it clear—I know this because I read it every day—that it has many criticisms to level at local government. The paper has previously commented favourably on the Government's attempts to curb some local government activities. The paper's attitude to this Bill is quite clear. It said:

"the proposed Local Government Bill which will ban party-political propaganda on the rates and force local Councils to set a rate by April 1st each year is yet another example of the Government's lack of coherent strategy on local government. Its own requirement of local government seems to be that it should do as it is told by central Government. And whenever local authorities fail to fall in line, new legislation is dreamed up to put more pressure on the town halls."

The article says later:

"Legislation intended to stifle opposition to central Government is surely unacceptable in Britain. It is difficult to see how a Bill of this kind can possibly get through the House of Lords which has become the guardian of our unwritten constitution in recent years. The way to control local government is through the ballot box."

I and, I am sure, my right hon. and hon. Friends agree. Although I see some merit in setting a rate by 1 April, I ask the House to reject the Bill.

7.28 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): In the increasingly complicated and fraught area of local government, it is good to see a thin Bill that has been drafted quickly and effectively to deal with a growing problem. I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on that.

I regret the need for yet more local government legislation, but I regret even more the circumstances that have given rise to it. Some people believe that the Bill lacks clarity or that it is insufficient to deal with the problem. I am confident, however, that the House will ensure that it is as tightly and accurately formed as possible, although I see no obvious inadequacies in it. The judgment of sufficiency is a matter for hindsight, and it is always open to the House to pass additional legislation if that proves necessary, as it may do. Whatever else, this is an important step which should dramatically improve the present position, and the sooner the Bill is passed the better.

Part II is by far the most important part of the Bill. There are two main victims of the misuse of public money for political advertising who must be protected. The first group is deprived and poor citizens, especially in inner city areas, whose money is being stolen by Labour politicians and wasted on propaganda. If those people wanted food, Labour politicians would say, "Let them eat paper." More to the point, those people want houses, and better schools, but they get unwanted newspapers, glossy freesheets, posters and campaigns. Resources raised to help those people are plundered and diverted in a direction which will not help them.

The second victim is the ratepayer—the thousands of people and businesses who fund local government and sacrifice their cash supposedly to help the less well off and to pay for essential services. Instead, their money is used unacceptably for entirely different purposes—political propaganda that they do not want, expect or endorse, and that is alien to the accepted consensus and tradition of local

government. When local government has already strained ratepayers, loyalty too far, this extra initiative strains their loyalty past the limit.

I shall draw on my experience of the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It is only reasonable for ratepayers who pay the highest rates in the country at least to expect some attempt at value for money, and a sensible order of priorities. As for the businesses which are going bankrupt or throwing people on the dole solely because of the rates level—that has been well established—*[Interruption.]* Businesses—the best people of all—have shown through their accounts and figures that that is precisely what is happening.

Mr. Tony Banks: By whom has that been established? When will the hon. Gentleman put pressure on the Government to publish the Cambridge report on the relationship between rates and jobs? It showed that there was no correlation between high rates and a loss of jobs. It is time that the hon. Gentleman got some economic literacy around him.

Mr. Merchant: If the hon. Gentleman wishes, I shall publish the Newcastle report, which shows emphatically that hundreds of jobs in Newcastle have been lost directly as a result of high rates. Those figures come from the best possible judges—the employers and businesses.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend said that Newcastle had the highest rates in the country. May I point out that Newcastle has the highest rate poundage and that Cleveland has the highest rate? Moreover, we have the highest unemployment. However many Cambridge statisticians may produce statistics, the plain facts are that in Langbaurgh, Hartlepool and Stockton, we have the highest unemployment and the highest rates.

Mr. Merchant: I would not wish to cross swords with my hon. Friend on the issue. I am sure that we can agree that we can produce almost unlimited statistics to prove the direct correlation between high rates and unemployment.

I wish to deal with the 1986-87 proposed budget of Newcastle city council, and its priorities. To pay for the retention of, for example, *City News*, which is the regular council propaganda sheet, and for the so-called priority area team newsletters, which are issued abundantly, the council is planning a package of cuts in other areas, which include stopping all weekend street cleansing, thereby adding more litter on the streets to the litter which will apparently be shoved through people's letter boxes, axing 15 teachers in middle schools, increasing the charges for meals on wheels or day centres, axing the learning support services in schools, or cutting emergency housing repair services. One of those options has become necessary because of the sums being spent to sustain *City News*. That list does not begin to take account of the areas of essential local government services which must be cut or removed entirely to maintain the costly public relations and press department, which does not appear to be a vital service.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Does the hon. Gentleman think that the publication of *City News* in Newcastle will be stopped if the Bill becomes law? Would the priority area team newsletters be stopped if the Bill became law? Will he list the other publications of Newcastle city council or Tyne and Wear county council which will be stopped as a result of the Bill becoming law?

Mr. Merchant: I have a selection of different publications which the city council produces, and which I am sure would be stopped if the legislation passed into law because of their contents. As for *City News*——

Mr. Clay: Name the publications that would be stopped by the Bill.

Mr. Merchant: I shall refer to them in detail in a minute. I have samples of them with me. Many issues of *City News* would certainly not be permissible under the legislation. I cannot predict whether the content and aim of *City News* will be changed as a result of the legislation. It is up to the local authority to decide. To alter its impact or play down its political message to maintain it as a publication, which might be done, would not benefit the people of Newcastle, whom the council are supposed to look after, bearing in mind the other necessary services.

It is ironic that the authority complains that it has insufficient money with which to provide services, moans about the loss of grant, which it brought about by its own actions, and is angry at being rate-capped, for which it is also responsible, yet continues to spend large sums on producing papers, leaflets and campaigns and on running an unnecessarily large public relations unit.

It is also interesting that the authority which has set up the so-called priority area teams which are designed to concentrate resources on Labour wards, and which is at least supposed to help deprived people and areas, is spending much of that money purely on propaganda. Priority area teams produce their own individual ward newsletters regularly, which promote their Labour councillors, and run glossy campaigns in a highly partisan political way. One of the worst examples is in the Moorside ward. I have a typical leaflet with me, which is full of highly political statements. It is entitled "Back to work campaign", and states:

> "Society is paying too high a price for Government policies. Mobilise the unemployed into campaigning. Increase public awareness of the problem of being unemployed. Draw attention to the effects of Government policies on unemployment, for example, privatisation, ratecapping, abolition of the county council."

Those may well be the views of Opposition Members and Labour members of the city council, but they are not the views of Conservative Members or Conservative councillors on the city council. Therefore, it is party political propaganda. If Labour Members wish to publish it, they should do so, but financed by the Labour party or themselves.

Mr. Boyes *rose*——

Mr. Merchant: I have already taken enough interventions, and I wish to proceed with my argument in view of the time.

Last year *City News* dropped its usual title, replaced it with *Campaign News*, and spent £10,000 on a specific political campaign against the Rates Bill before it had been fully debated by Parliament. Therefore, it was obviously pursuing a highly party political campaign. The city council was widely condemned by all political parties, except the Labour party, and even by some Labour councillors. That is another specific example of money being spent on propaganda, which would not be permitted under this legislation.

Mr. Boyes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Merchant: I shall not give way again in view of the time. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to contribute his views.

Last year people on Tyneside were furious when the Tyne and Wear county council diverted £250,000 of ratepayers' money to the NUM to support the miners' strike. Newcastle city council later followed suit with a smaller sum. The patience of ratepayers has been strained to the limit by the extra misuse of their money on propaganda, and they are witnessing a growing trend.

Mr. Clay: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) to say something that is blatantly untrue, and which he knows is untrue? The NUM did not receive donations from the Tyne and Wear county council. Donations were received by individual miners who were experiencing hardship, just as they received donations from many members of the public——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) must take responsibility for the speech he is making.

Mr. Merchant: Perhaps at some stage the hon. Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay) will enlighten us on who ran and held the fund.

Mr. Michie: I did.

Mr. Merchant: That rather proves the point.

The patience of the ratepayers and people of Newcastle, as in many other parts of the country, has been strained to the limit by the misuse of their money on propaganda and, as I have said, they are seeing a growing trend. They rightly ask, "What on earth is a local authority doing using our money to try to persuade us to change our views or to influence our assessment of current affairs?" That is surely the reverse of the current relationship — that a local authority should be listening, not broadcasting, and should be carrying out the wishes of the local population rather than persuading that population to follow its wishes.

People look to Government to correct this perversion of the role of local councillors. The Bill does that, and the sooner it is in force, the better.

7.41 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Life in this House would seem very strange if we were not debating yet another interminable Local Government Bill or using Westminster to interfere in the affairs of democratically-elected local authorities. We are doing that yet again tonight. The Bill is just a continuation of the malicious campaign that the Government have incessantly waged against our town halls since 1979, and the ferocity of that campaign has been stepped up since 1983.

Support for the Bill by Conservative Members has been based on the usual amalgam of anecdotes, half-truths and bigotry that one has come to expect from the Conservative Benches. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) said, this measure will not build or renovate any more houses, nor restore cuts in library services. It will do nothing for the social services. All those matters are affected by central Government policies, and the Government are responsible for the downturn, mass unemployment and deprivation in our inner city areas. It must have struck home to Conservative Members that there is a close correlation between high unemployment and social and economic deprivation and the riots that we have witnessed in our cities. All those incidents have taken place in Labour local authority areas and in areas represented by Labour Members of Parliament.

Conservative Members will no doubt argue that if the money spent on information—they call it propaganda—had been spent on other things, those riots would not have occurred. However, they should read what Widdicombe says about the amount of money spent by local authorities on so-called propaganda. It is infinitesimal compared with the total budgets that local authorities command. Frankly, had none of that money been spent, it would not have made a jot of difference to the massive social problems facing our inner city areas.

Mr. Forth: How much did the GLC spend on its campaign against abolition? Will the hon. Gentleman estimate how many houses that would have built or how many people in need it would have helped?

Mr. Banks: I shall give the hon. Gentleman the exact figure. I prefer to trade in accurate facts, not vague generalisations. The total amount to 31 March 1986—and I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall continue to spend up to that date—will be £7,676,779 out of a total budget of £2,000 million. Conservative Members should bear that in mind.

I accept that that money would have built some more houses, but how many more would be built with the £15,000 million that the Government are wasting on Trident? These arguments can be swapped backwards and forwards across the Floor of the House, and hon. Members can make of them what they will, but I know that even fewer houses will be built once the GLC is abolished. Had we been able to dissuade the Government from their disastrous course of abolishing the GLC, that £7 million would have been well spent. As it is, the money has been well spent on advising the people of London what they will lose when the GLC is abolished.

This Bill is about pandering to the whims of the authoritarian bigot who leads this country and the Conservative party. The Prime Minister, whose finger is on the Bill all the time, knows nothing of local government except that it always seems to be giving her trouble. It has never occurred to the right hon. Lady that the trouble might be caused by her policies. She seems to think that is a failure of her Ministers to get the message across and that somehow we should grow to like abolition and rate capping. She would like us to think that it will be good for us. Unfortunately, the Secretary of State's predecessor was found to be wanting in that respect, and now he is taking an early bath.

I had hoped that the new Secretary of State, who comes to us with something of a reputation—although he did a neat Brutus job on his former environment boss—would for once have defended local government, but he could hardly wait to bring forward this new attack on councils.

It has been claimed that Labour local authorities in particular have adopted a change of attitude towards central Government. Yes, they have. They have been forced to do so because central Government have completely changed the rules. No central Government since the war have, as the present Government have, used mass unemployment as an act of deliberate policy. No other central Government have cut the amount of money

available for local government expenditure, nor have they constructed a local authority finance arrangement that is inexplicable to most and capable of allowing Ministers to fiddle on the advice of their civil servants. The Government have changed the relationship between central and local Government, and, in doing so, they have brought local government to the brink of chaos.

Conservative Members have said much about party political progaganda, but that really means facts, propaganda or campaigns with which they personally do not agree. Anyone who knows anything about local government knows that it is already illegal to have party political campaigning on the rates, and Widdicombe has produced no evidence to show that that has happened.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth) *rose*——

Mr. Banks: It is nice to see the hon. Gentleman, because he has not been around very much this evening.

There is no way in which the GLC would have got away with party political campaigning on the rates given the number of times that it has been in and out of the courts.

It is all very well for the Government to say that the GLC has used ratepayers' money on propagandising, but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said, the Government have spent millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to put forward their policies. From the Opposition's point of view, the fact that the Tory party is in office and puts forward its policies based on its party political programme looks exactly like party political propaganda. I do not complain about that, because that is what democracy is all about. If we win an election, either at local or national level, we have a right — nay, a responsibility—to put over our policies to the electorate. I see nothing wrong with that. It is called democracy.

Mr. Dickens: Will the hon. Gentleman concede that there is no such thing as Government or local government money? It is ratepayers' and taxpayers' money that we are entrusted to spend in a sensible and responsible way. If a local authority decides to become, politically, a nuclear-free zone and spends millions of pounds on large posters telling everybody who motors through its area that it is a nuclear-free zone, is it erecting the posters for the benefit of low-flying Russian aircraft or, yet again, is ratepayers' money being spent in a wasteful political way? That is only one of many examples of waste.

Mr. Banks: The hon. Gentleman has a great depth of knowledge about local government that all hon. Members will respect. There is nothing wrong with a local authority advocating a nuclear-free zone if it believes that a heightened awareness of the dangers of nuclear weapons is in the interests of its ratepayers. The Government spend millions of pounds advocating the use and retention of nuclear weapons. Why is it good enough for central Government to spend—as the hon. Gentleman so rightly said—taxpayers' money but wrong for local authorities to spend ratepayers' money?

Elected authorities must act as they see fit in the interests of the people they represent. As I said earlier, I not complaining about the money that the Government spend. I believe that they have a responsibility to do so if they believe that it is in the national interest. Equally, I believe that it is right for local authorities to do likewise if they believe that the policies being advocated are in the interests of their constituents. That is called democracy and it is about time that the Conservative party started to learn a little about it instead of trying continually to undermine it.

Mr. Holt *rose*——

Mr. Banks: I shall not give way.

Mr. Holt: Is the hon. Gentleman afraid to do so?

Mr. Banks: I shall not give way but I am certainly not afraid of the hon. Gentleman.

The modern Conservative party appears to believe in democracy only on its own terms. That democracy has to be set aside if it threatens Tory party interests. Conservative Members must realise that a pluralist democracy needs a strong local government presence. It needs a voice arguing, if necessary, against the policy of central Government. The voice of County hall has been loud since 1983, because local government has never before been under such sustained attack from central Government. That is true of town halls and county halls throughout the country.

The GLC's awareness campaign against abolition undoubtedly outraged the Prime Minister and her Ministers. Perhaps that is a major origin of the Bill. It was an extremely successful campaign. Indeed, the GLC swept the board at this year's advertising industry's awards. It will go down in history as one of the most effective campaigns ever seen in Britain, and I am very proud of that.

The campaign was necessary, first, because abolition was and remains an exercise in party political vindictiveness. It is wholly irrelevant to the efficient running of local government in London. Secondly, the campaign was needed to counter the downright lies, distortions and misinformation about the GLC that were put out by the Government's propaganda machines in Whitehall and Fleet street. We at County hall believed that it would have been a dereliction of duty to allow the lies of *The Sun*, the *Daily Express*, the *Daily Mail* and other gutter rags to create their image of the GLC in the minds of Londoners. We could not expect impartiality from the Government and we certainly could not expect objectivity from Fleet street. Accordingly, we provided both through our anti-abolition campaign. I believe that in doing so we have raised the level of consciousness in London. We have alerted Londoners to what they will lose after 31 March 1986. That is why more than two thirds of Londoners support the GLC and oppose its abolition, which the Government want to push through.

It is clear that the Bill is intended to try to blunt the political impact of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils, especially on the local elections that will take place in May 1986. I do not think that the Government will succeed. They have involved themselves in a cynical exercise. The Government set up the Widdicombe inquiry and expected it to find local authorities guilty on all counts. Ministers still refer to it as the inquiry investigating local authority abuses. The interim report of the Widdicombe inquiry did not deliver the goods that the Government were hoping for and expecting. They are effectively ignoring that report and proposing a pre-emptive changing of the rules.

That is what the Government have done at every turn. They hate opposition. If a council, such as the GLC,

[Mr. Banks]

objects to Government policies, it is abolished. The Government are prepared to scrap elections and to change the rules when they find that their proposals are not acceptable. There is no doubt that in Committee the Secretary of State will be changing the Bill drastically to pick up all the details that he knows he has missed and that will be brought to his attention in due course.

If the Bill were enacted in its present form, it would mean the end of a wide range of public information campaigns, and my right hon. and hon. Friends have mentioned many of them. Some campaigns I agree with, and others I do not. If the Bill is enacted, Merton's campaign in favour of privatisation will be brought to an end. I am in favour of that campaign being halted in one sense, but if Merton thinks that the campaign is in the interests of its ratepayers, it is right to mount it.

There has been much talk about the money that is being spent by local authorities on so-called propaganda campaigns and publicity budgets. The budget of the City of Westminster, led by Lady Porter, has not been mentioned. Over the two years of her leadership, her publicity budget has increased from £108,000 to more than £500,000—almost a 500 per cent. increase. I have an example of Lady Porter's information sheet, which bears a handsome picture of her on the front page. The information sheet states:

"Westminster Action '85 . . . exclusive interview with Lady Porter."

If Westminster city council cannot obtain an exclusive interview with its own leader, who can? Of course, the information sheet will be stopped if the Bill is enacted. It consists of an anti-GLC diatribe, and if that is what Lady Porter thinks is in the interests of Westminster, she has a right—nay, a duty—to put it out.

My right hon. and hon. Friends talk about and believe in democracy—[HON. MEMBERS: "Good".]—contrary to the weasel words of the Conservative Members. Democracy will be defended by them for as long as it serves their interests. When it threatens their policies or position, it will go out of the window.

Once again, the Government are prepared to destroy out of their blind fear and hatred of opposition. That is what lies at the centre of the Bill. The Bill is a sign of a bullying and stupid Government and it should be rejected.

7.58 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I welcome the Bill, which is broadly in line with a ten-minute Bill that I introduced in July, which was passed on a free vote despite being ably opposed by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). The hon. Gentleman talked arrant nonsense when he spoke of £7 million of public money being petty cash.

Mr. Tony Banks: I did not say that.

Mr. Leigh: I am sure that the Labour party would have liked a budget of £7 million for the 1983 general election. If its membership were not declining, it would not have to rely on public money to support its campaigns. It is arrant nonsense for the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) to say that *Pravda* would approve of the Bill. It is designed to prevent what happens in the Soviet Union —the people's money being used to peddle one political line.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West talked about Lady Porter. I voted against abolition. I resent my money being used for political campaigns, whether by the Labour party or by the Conservative party. That is not the function of local authorities and I resent such expenditure.

I do not wish to go over the ground that I covered in my ten-minute Bill or in my correspondence with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West in various letters to national newspapers. However, I must reiterate firmly that the purpose of local authorities traditonally is to carry out the functions laid down by Parliament, not to usurp those functions. Local government is the servant of Parliament, not its rival.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West talked about the consensus breaking down. That happened not because of Government actions. Government are not engaged in campaigns paid for by public money to convince the British people of the merits of privatisation of British Gas. The Government are not paying for campaigns to convince the British people that this Bill is a good thing. The consensus in local government has been broken by militants who believe in what they call the local state and who abuse the power and trust given them by Parliament to pursue political objectives of their own.

They seek to negotiate peace treaties with foreign powers; they hold talks with terrorist groups; they pretend, by the ridiculous charades of calling areas nuclear-free zones, to exclude such areas from the defence system properly laid down by Parliament for the protection of the nation; they set up police committees in places where they have no police responsibility; and they pour millions of pounds into the pockets of those whose sole object is to abuse the police and to drive a wedge between those whom we employ to uphold the law and large sections of the community whom the police protect. Above all, the cabals of new-style councillors have set up a monstrous propaganda machine on the rates.

The recent study by Professor David Regan details expenditure on anti-nuclear material. The GLC has spent £3 million in the Greater London area. Manchester has spent £500,000. Although the worst offenders are in the big cities, they are not confined to the big cities. Even in Lincoln Labour councillors are under the delusion that they live in a nuclear-free zone. Scunthorpe has produced a free newspaper. There is no such thing as a free newspaper, any more than there is a free lunch. The ratepayers have to pick up the bill.

The Left argues that preventing councils spending money on political advertising inhibits free speech. It is nonsense to say that preventing one-sided political propaganda, paid for compulsorily by ratepayers of all political opinions, threatens democratic freedoms. On the contrary, it strengthens them by offering protection against the monopoly abuse of position and power by whoever happens to win control of a town hall.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) quoted Thomas Jefferson. We all want to protect minorities. The Bill is aimed at protecting minorities from the tyrannies of whoever happens to control a town hall.

Mr. Boyes: Has the hon. Gentleman read what Widdicombe said on page 37 of the report? Commenting on the GLC's campaign to protect itself, compared with what other councils had done, he said:

"we do not see that it is wrong in principle."

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant) dealt with that fairly. A political propaganda pamphlet was produced and paid for by the rates. That is happening in London, Newcastle, Leeds and elsewhere. That is why we need the Bill.

In a few respects the Bill is deficient and I hope to see it amended in Committee. First, the Bill prohibits certain activities by councils, but provides no remedy should its provisions be broken. It leaves it up to the citizen who is aggrieved by his council to take action. Thus, the citizen must police and enforce the Bill. How is the citizen to do that?

Hon. Members have talked of district auditors being toothless wonders. That is well illustrated by the grubby little cultural festival of India affair. An attempt was made by the GLC leader to buy votes in Brent. That backfired badly and he tried to circumvent the provisions of the interim provisions legislation. He was caught lying about a breach of contract. There was a ham-fisted attempt at a cover-up, which embarrassed a respectable Hindu group. No blame could be attached to that group. A respectable company was financially embarrassed. Attempts have been made to complain to the district auditor, but it will take weeks, if not months, to investigate. In the meantime, the company is without its money.

The truth is that complaints to district auditors are ineffective in preventing abuses by councils. Indeed, many district auditors refuse to consider complaints until after the offending item appears in the accounts—up to a year after the event—by which time the council has won the unfair political advantage that the Bill is designed to prevent.

A ratepayer can apply to the court for an injunction against the council that breaks the Bill's provisions. That means that most local residents who are not ratepayers cannot complain to the court. However, the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act sets a precedent in empowering voters rather than ratepayers to apply to the court. The Bill should be amended in Committee to extend that provision to this legislation.

In addition, even those who have the right to sue rarely do so because of the prospect of ruinous costs if they lose. A council has ratepayers' money available to pay for its defence and to pay for the other side's costs if it loses. If no one is prepared to go to court to enforce the Bill's provisions, the Bill will have little effect.

A number of electors are ready to call Livingstone to account over the festival of India affair, but they cannot do so because of the risk that, if they lose on some technicality, the costs would cripple them. The council faces no such threat. Consequently, legislative provisions go unenforced. It would be a pity if this Bill met the same fate.

I urge that the Bill be extended to provide from public funds the costs of actions against delinquent councillors, subject to safeguards to eliminate frivolous cases.

In principle, the Bill will make a valuable contribution to our constitutional law and to the protection of our democratic system, subject to the small amendments that I have mentioned.

As Parliament is the creator of local government and the fount of its power and authority, it behoves Parliament to give the public the means to protect itself when that power is abused. If the Bill is suitably amended, I believe that it will achieve that.

8.8 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Clause 1 provides for the setting of a rate by a certain date. That is relevant to Liverpool. The Secretary of State said that originally it was relevant to 30 other councils. He said that 13 did not set a rate, but in the end Liverpool was left on its own.

There has been much misinformation about Liverpool city council. The 30 councils which decided not to set a rate by a particular date were acting in line with the Labour party policy agreed in 1984 in a document called "The Defence of Local Democracy, Services and Jobs". That statement was carried by the conference almost unanimously. It said:

"Labour local authorities should not act as agents for central government, even if the resulting budget is out of line with Government policy . . . Non-compliance could lead to some Councils being unable to fix a rate. For others it could mean running out of money for essential services."

I do not want to hear any more statements about Liverpool city council acting out of line with Labour party policies. That was Labour party policy, agreed at the conference. However, eventually Liverpool found itself fighting that battle alone. I want that to be put firmly on the record.

Some right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the Stonefrost report. Paragraph 2.1 is headed:

"How Liverpool City Council arrived at its present financial position."

Paragraph 2(3) says:

"From 1981-82 to 1984-85 Liverpool's Grant Related Expenditure Assessment increased in cash terms by 8·5 per cent. compared with 14 per cent. for all Metropolitan Districts and 17 per cent. for all authorities. (4) From 1975-76 to 1978-79"—

when the Liberal party, supported by the Conservatives, was in power—

"the City Council reduced its expenditure by 6 per cent. in real terms. This resulted in expenditure being 10 per cent. less than it would have been had the City Council increased its spending in line with other local authorities. (5) The relatively low spending position of Liverpool in 1978-79 formed the basis of its spending target for 1981-82. Liverpool further reduced its spending towards that target."

Paragraph 2.2 says:

"Based on these facts, the Council's case against the Government is that a major contribution to Liverpool's present financial position is the system of targets and penalties."

That is said not by me but by the Stonefrost report, which has been referred to by so many right hon. and hon. Members.

There are differences of opinion about whether the Liverpool councillors should have accepted it. Liverpool councillors are not *Militant*-dominated. There are probably eight or nine councillors on the city council who support the ideas of *Militant*. However, there are 48 Labour councillors, of whom about 30 are members of the Roman Catholic Church. Many of them take part in community work for the Church. One of those councillors was killed while he was on holiday in Spain. I attended his requiem mass. The church was full of people because that councillor, Peter Lloyd, was a pillar of the local Roman Catholic community.

Liverpool councillors remain solidly together because they believe that the policies forced upon the city by this Government have driven it into this position. This Government are responsible for the present crisis—not Liverpool councillors, or Mr. Hatton, or a small group of militants, or a crackpot group of people. Liverpool city councillors are therefore standing firm.

[Mr. Eric S. Heffer]

I wish to draw attention to a book whose title is "Liverpool on the Brink". It is written by Michael Parkinson, the director of the centre for urban studies at Liverpool university. I recommend that book to every right hon. and hon. Member. It explains how Liverpool has got into this position. It says:

"When the Conservatives took power in 1979 central Government was providing 62 per cent. of the city's net income and the rates over 37 per cent. By 1983 the Government's contribution had dropped to 44 per cent. and the rates had risen to over 55 per cent."

That is what has happened in my city. It also says:

"From 1971 to 1985 total employment in the city fell by 33 per cent. in contrast to the national figure of only 3 per cent. And this brought heavy rates of unemployment. In fact, Merseyside has had the highest rate of unemployment of any English conurbation in every decade since the 1950s."

That again is the background to the situation in Liverpool.

The book also contains this passage:

"The Director of the Government's special Merseyside Task Force, Eric Sorenson, was asked by the select committee why so much attention had been paid to Liverpool's problems in recent years. He replied simply, 'Because they are worse.'"

I know Eric Sorenson. He is always on about Liverpool——

Mr. Leigh: So is the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Heffer: Yes. I am obsessed by the problems of the people of Liverpool. I am obsessed by the fact that on one council estate in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) 90 per cent. of the people are living on some form of Government benefit because they are unemployed. I am also obsessed by the fact that Liverpool people still have some of the worst housing in this country. It makes me sick to think that, if the Government had provided an extra £25 million to £30 million for Liverpool, there would have been no problem. However, this Government do not have one iota of compassion, or deep feeling, or understanding. Young people have no possible chance of obtaining employment.

Yes, I am obsessed and I do not deny it. I am obsessed because Liverpool people happen to be my people; I am one of them. When there was almost full employment, I worked alongside them. There were jobs in the shipyards and in the docks and on the big construction sites. Where are those jobs now? Luckily, there are still some jobs in the construction industry.

When the Liberal party was in power in Liverpool no council houses were built, but in the last two years the Liverpool city council, under the Labour party, has built 3,600 council houses. Those council houses were not in the pipeline before the Labour party took office, contrary to the argument of Mr. Trevor Jones.

I am pleased that the Secretary of State has said that he is prepared to meet us tomorrow. I hope that he will be prepared to meet Liverpool Members of Parliament. I am talking about Labour Members, because they requested the meeting. I hope that the Government will not stand entrenched in their position and that they will be prepared to meet the democratically elected representatives of the city of Liverpool.

The Government, quite rightly, feel that they must do something along the lines of what they were elected to do. But so, too, are the Liverpool councillors right to argue that they must fulfil their commitment to their electorate. Both bodies were elected by the people. God almighty, as rational, civilised people, they should be prepared to meet and discuss ways to overcome the problems.

I hope that such an attitude will arise out of tomorrow's meeting. If it does not, Liverpool will be faced with a serious problem. Although there may be some short-term advantage to the Government if the city is run down and the councillors blamed, in the long term the Government will suffer.

8.21 pm

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): In the town hall in Leicester there is a monster with two heads.

Mr. Tony Banks: Peter Bruinvels.

Mr. Spencer: One of the heads is the information unit and the other is the contracts monitoring unit. That creature, which suddenly emerged in June this year, gives off a dull, Leftist monotone that stretches all over the city. It knows about as much of concern, truth and democracy as a bank robber knows of honesty.

Far from being interested in listening to and conducting a dialogue with other people, there is simply a uniformed barrage of propaganda laid across the city at public expense. Those two organs are aided and abetted by the so-called civic newspaper, the *Leicester Link*, which howls abuse at the Government on every conceivable opportunity—and it does so on the rates.

We had no sooner swept up the pamphlets about the anti-rate-capping campaign, we had no sooner removed the stickers from every park bench, public vehicle and lawn mower in every part of Leicester, than we were afflicted by a campaign against the Transport Bill.

The experience of Leicester on publicity is typical of many other places. In early 1983, a small unit in the chief executive's department dealt with publicity. It had a handful of staff with a comparatively small budget. By 1984, the staff had increased to 22. This year the unit has almost doubled its numbers and its budgeted expenditure, if it is not stopped, will be almost £250,000.

What has that to do with the Labour party's sudden preoccupation with and interest in truth and democracy? Why is there suddenly an interest which, two years ago, could not be found? How does it come about that the nearer we get to the next general election, the more the Labour party in Leicester appears to be overcome by a compulsive desire to tell what it says is the truth about the Tory Government?

Of course, it is not the truth. Those of us who witnessed local government before the Tory party was elected to power in 1979 know only too well the hollowness of the argument that the Tory party has brought about a change in the relationship between central and local government. Those of us who were in town halls before 1979 had already witnessed at first hand the sea change that was taking place under a Labour Government.

When Ken Livingstone was seeking to be elected as the parliamentary Labour party candidate in Hampstead in 1979—at that time he was the chairman of the housing committee of Camden council — he was distributing what the local newspaper called Livingstone's largesse. Tenants who saw fit to air complaints were sent away with public money to massage their problems in the hope that they might be induced to vote for Mr. Livingstone at the forthcoming general election.

While that was happening, a number of moderates on Camden council were prepared to look the other way. They put forward an acceptable face while Mr. Livingstone got on with his dirty work in a small time way, which subsequently, when he became the leader of the GLC, he was to implement on a much larger scale. Therefore, it is nonsense to say that there is something new afoot. It has been going on for many years. The lesson is that, unless something is done to stop it, it will continue unabated.

Let us consider what Leicester has had to put up with in relation to the Transport Bill. An open day was held, paid for with ratepayers' money, with balloons, stickers, carrier bags and so on—you name it, they had it—given away to try to cultivate a special community identity, or so it was described, for Leicester City Bus. How did that help people who wanted to get across the city? How did it help the elderly to be told that if the Transport Bill became law fares might be increased by more than 30 per cent. and the most essential services run down? That was typical of the misleading propaganda put out at public expense.

However, matters did not rest there. The place chosen to stage the open day was next door to a children's festival being attended by children from 17 schools. The open day had hot dog stalls, ice cream stalls, music festivals and the like to inveigle children and young people into what was nothing more than a political indoctrination session on the rates. That happens time and again throughout the country.

The latest excess relates to the activities of the low pay unit. I was sent a poster to put up at my place of work to recruit those who feel that they are low paid. If I put it up in my office, I would expect to be killed in the rush. I am asked to fill in a form stating my hours of work, how much I am paid, my overtime, and so on. If I need any advice, I must refer to the low pay unit. All that is at public expense. It has been distributed throughout the city without regard to the identity of the recipient.

Of course, the true objective of the low pay unit and the current campaign is not the welfare of the low paid. It is designed, quite nakedly, to attack the Government's social security reforms. The low pay unit and its cosmetic concern for those with low pay merely conceals the true nature of the exercise.

This Bill is necessary. If we want further evidence of that, it can be found in a newspaper put through my door in Camden this week. It advertises a public meeting to be run by the Camden council women's committee in conjunction with the Camden Labour party women's section on strip and body searches of Irish women. It is to be held in the Camden centre. The advertisement, at the bottom, says:

"If you would like to attend the meeting and need to pay for a sitter for a child, elderly sick friend or relative claim up to £2 an hour. Form from"—

then it gives a telephone number, which I know from my service on the Camden council is that of the town hall. Such examples are commonplace in Camden, and they must be stopped.

My only question is whether the Bill is man enough for the job. I should have preferred to see a clause relating not to the functions of the authority but limited to the statutory duties placed on it. Anybody who has ever served as a member of a Labour-controlled local authority will know only too well that the Bill will be scrutinised. It will go before leading counsel in the Temple and every dot, comma, hyphen and syntax will be looked at from every conceivable aspect. If there is the slightest hole in the Bill, it will be crawled through before one can say "district auditor".

I welcome the Bill as a step on the right road. Like the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), I am obsessed by local government, but by the way in which its true purpose is perverted. Like him, I am upset, but I am upset by the way in which otherwise good men go on perverting it and then claim credit for doing so.

8.31 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I have listened to the debate all the afternoon. A sad aspect of it is the way in which hon. Members' attitudes have been so polarised. For me, one of the saddest things is that there is no recognition, particularly by Conservative Members, that there is a place for local government and that it should be carried out by people who are elected locally and responsible locally, who carry out functions as they perceive them locally.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) was a glaring example of the polarisation, sweeping generalisations and objections on specific issues on which the Bill is based. The Bill derives from a few specific cases that have arisen within local government —I do not judge whether they are good or bad—from which the Government have come up with a spiteful and malevolent Bill that will do far more to destroy local democracy that can be seen at first. The spitefulness has taken the Government down a road that they will rue.

Another disturbing aspect of the debate is an obsession with one or two incidents, which are constantly being quoted by Tory Members. The GLC and the city of Liverpool have the right to inform their electorate in the way in which they have. However, because of the Government's political objections resulting from their losing the argument, they have come up with this tawdry and pathetic Bill.

I live in the constituency that I represent and not in London, like the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South. I am disturbed by the insulting way in which the Government have introduced the Bill before the Widdicombe committee has reported. The Government had said that they would not act prematurely and would wait so that

"the Committee's recommendations in their Interim Report cannot be taken to prejudice their findings and broader judgements reached in the light of their appraisal of all the evidence eventually presented to them."

Not only has this undertaking been broken, but the findings of the interim report have been largely ignored. The report concluded that it was acceptable in principle for local authorities to publicise matters of political controversy. The only distinction that was drawn was between material issued in the interests of local authorities and that issued in furtherance of the interest of a political party.

If the Government want to introduce such propaganda, they can do so. Therefore, local government should be allowed to do the same. If the Widdicombe committee is being so treated by the Government, it might as well resign. It is wasting its time, and should no longer be associated with such a transparent charade.

The Bill's proposals mean that local authorities will not be able to publish any material that opposes Government

[Mr. Allan Rogers]

legislation, however vicious and unjustified. The public will be able to hear only the Government's case. By charging through with this legislation, the Government have shown that they know how indefensible their proposals are.

The Bill is redolent of powers that are used in Russia and South Africa to prevent the public voicing opposition to Government measures. I am amazed at the extent to which the Government are prepared to go to muzzle legitimate dissent by local authorities. That can be appreciated by reading the full text of clause 2, by which local authorities will not be allowed to publish any material that can affect public support for a party,

"body, cause or campaign identified with, or likely to be regarded as identified with, a political party."

Any group of people who want to oppose what the local authority may want to voice against the Government could set up a pseudo-political party with which they could be identified. If the Minister does not accept that point, perhaps he will tell me what the identification of a political party will be in the Bill. How long does a political party have to be in existence before it falls within the ambit of the Bill? Can one create an instant political party to prevent spending in a particular way?

The Bill shows the Government's hypocrisy. They claim that they have a code of practice for any publicity into which they enter, as if, by saying that, they prove that the code of practice is good. Besides the advertising for the sale of British Telecom, the Government have spent millions of pounds on politically controversial issues—a fact that has not yet emerged in the debate. Money has been spent on campaigns in favour of council house sales, on the defence policy, particularly with reference to cruise missiles, on the drafting in of reams of civil servants to the Ministry of Defence to propagate the Conservative party's views on nuclear weaponry, on local government financial controls and on various privatisation measures. If ever there were controversial party political issues, those are they. Whose money was used? The taxpayers' money has been used in the same way that the Government are trying to prevent local authorities from spending ratepayers' money. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) said on publication of the Bill, the Government's,

"record of partisanship and the abuse of the public service for overtly political ends is unparalleled. No Government has used the Whitehall machine more to serve narrow party interests."

Local government organisations are solidly against the Bill. Not all those organisations are controlled by the Labour party. The Association of County Councils, which can hardly be called a Labour party organisation, does not want legislative changes in local authorities' powers to provide information. The ACC believes that no change should be made to section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 or to section 137 of the Act that empowers local authorities to incur expenditure for the benefit of ratepayers. The only change that the association would want is that all public sector advertising should be subject to the Advertising Standards Authority's code of practice. If a right is introduced for members of the public to object, it should be extended to all public sector advertising. I am pleased that the Minister is nodding. Perhaps that can be incorporated into future legislation. What about the statutory bodies outside the Bill, which can use resources to put forward their political viewpoint. Many of them do, including the gas boards, the water boards and the electricity boards.

The Bill is simply a vicious and spiteful attack on local government because the Government lost the battle against the GLC and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. The Association of County Councils has consistently opposed the proposal that the powers of local authorities should be subverted and brought under central control. In April 1982, the ACC stated that any changes in section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 would

"represent a quite unnecessary and undesirable change from the present satisfactory operation . . . The Association . . . would not wish to see any diminution in the existing scope of S. 137. The reasons for this view are both constitutional and . . . practical . . . The new proposals will remove the ability of counties to act . . .and the new provision replaces a local perception of what is required by a national one."

Once more we shall see the steady erosion of local democracy.

In a letter to the Under-Secretary of State—the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) — the chairman of the executive council of the ACC said:

"An abuse of a discretionary power must certainly be capable of effective challenge"—

no one doubts that—

"but the better channel for doing so may well lie elsewhere, possibly through the District Audit procedures and the powers of extraordinary audit."

The present law curbs authorities that step outside it and use ratepayers' money for overtly political ends. The law should be exercised as it stands instead of removing a discretionary right of local authorities. That was acknowledged by the Under-Secretary of State and his Department. Why have the Government changed their mind? The only thing that has happened is that the Government have lost the battle with the GLC and the AMA.

Only a few years ago, the Under-Secretary of State said in answer to the ACC's submission:

"Local authorities are essentially political bodies elected on political mandates, and run by politicians, and their decisions are inevitably political in nature. Political considerations must affect the balance of the individual decisions they reach—and that applies to Conservative councils taking decisions on privatisation as much as Labour authorities reaching conclusions on, say, the right to buy. Therefore, we cannot simply stop local authorities acting politically. Nor can we deal with the problem simply by limiting Section 137 . . . Section 137 is an important discretionary power for local authorities, but . . . it is just one of a number of discretionary powers which authorities are free to use and abuse, subject always to general legal constraints."

The Government have changed their mind on that matter.

Clause 1 places a duty on local authorities to set a rate by a specific date. That is not unreasonable in itself. Indeed, it could be considered necessary for the proper planning of activities in local government. However, I question the Government's motives in introducing it. If they have such a consuming passion for tidiness and punctuality, will the Minister tell us why they do not implement a more rigorous timetable in announcing rate support grant settlements? For some time, they were produced in November, but lately there has been a slippage, and now there is no guaranteed date for announcing the RSG. The only guideline is that it is normally announced before Christmas. Any delay or uncertainty in announcing the RSG delays the county councils' budget process and reduces the time available to them to finalise the process.

Clause 7, which also worries me, deals with mortgages. Unlike some of my hon. Friends, I have some sympathy with the proposition, although I also have reservations. My reservations spring from the fact that the clause demonstrates, and is obviously motivated by, the Government's spite and maliciousness. The proposition that prevents local authorities from selling mortage portfolios without the consent of individual mortgagors would gain some sympathy in my area, because I represent a constituency and an area with almost the highest owner-occupancy in Britain. The south Wales mining valleys have about 75 per cent. owner-occupancy, which is surpassed by west Sussex. Therefore, I am well aware of the problems of selling leases and mortgage portfolios with—out the consent or knowledge of the occupiers. The problems of leasehold disposal are well known to hon. Members. But if this is such a desirable development, why do not the Government extend it beyond local government? Why do they not allow everyone to participate in this great freedom? Why not impose similar conditions on building societies, banks, finance houses and the rest of the Tory party's friends in this game? Will the Minister explain his intentions in this area?

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said, this is a spiteful Bill. It is the response of a Government who have lost all the arguments during the past few years and who can think of no other course than this shabby, mean Bill.

8.47 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): Let no one be under any illusion about my support for local government. I would not have spent 10 years as a county councillor if I did not support local government. I spent 12 years on a district council, three as its leader, and I would not have done that had I not been a supporter of and a believer in local government. But how I wish that the local government scene today was similar to the scene when I entered it in 1967. In those days, one had great respect for one's colleagues—even one's opposition colleagues—on a local authority, because we were all involved in local government for the good of everyone in our local authority area. There was not as much party political partisanship as there is today. Local government was not manipulated for party political purposes as it is today. I very much regret the direction in which local government has gone during the 18 years that I have been closely associated with it. Many right hon. and hon. Members may share those sentiments.

There are several reasons for this politicisation of local government. The obvious one is that, because the Labour party has been in opposition for the majority of that time, it sees the local government base as its only base. A less obvious one—I have mentioned it previously in the House—is due to the new breed of local councillor, and the Local Government Act 1972 has been responsible for certain developments in that respect. I fear that some people who are now elected to serve on local authorities regard the interest of the area as secondary to their party political ambitions.

Unfortunately, many councillors are now paid by one local authority but are elected members of another. In other words, they are paid while taking up their full-time occupations in the area of the authority of which they are elected members. That has also led to the new breed of councillor.

A new way of operating councils has also developed. I have knowledge of authorities in which the policies determined by the controlling Labour group are not determined by the councillors. Hon. Members who have been involved in local government will know that party groups meet before council meetings to determine the policy that will be adopted on the issues of the day. I was the leader of the group on my authority and the members regularly met a couple of days before the council meeting. However, at our group, only the elected Conservative councillors were present, and only they made the policy decisions and, when we were the majority group, implemented them on the council.

I understand, however, that that is not the procedure with Labour groups. When they meet in a political context, their groups are considerably enhanced, and include trade union officials, representatives from the wards and members of general management committees. Decisions are then taken about what the council will decide. Thus, the decisions that are taken in the council chamber originate in the Labour clubs. That has brought about a new position in local authorities. Those taking the decisions do not have responsibility for the decision-making.

I have witnessed the way in which, over the years, moderate Labour councillors were eased out, because they implemented decisions that were to the benefit of the area without intense regard for the politics involved. They were pensioned off, as it were, in favour of intense political councillors, usually of the Left variety, who got elected to safe seats, while the more moderate councillors gradually disappeared because their policies did not suit the new militancy in the Labour party. That has undermined local democracy and accountability.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) rather gave the game away when he said that if the Labour party was in power it would abandon the present procedures and introduce new legislation which would, blatantly, allow politics on the rates. That was my interpretation of his remarks. It would mean that Labour groups in control of the council would be able blatantly to use ratepayers' money for party political purposes to get themselves re-elected. That is how the system could be exploited.

Such is my feeling for local government that I have regretted having had to vote for local government legislation since 1983. I was proud to be a member of the Rates Bill Committee, but I regret that the legislation was necessary. A Rates Bill would never have been necessary in the late 1960s under the old system of local government. The abolition of the GLC would never have been necessary. There was a great deal more sense and responsibility then. I regret that we have to pass this local government legislation.

We have to avoid exploitation of the rates. The leader of the council in Norwich—that fine city in East Anglia—is reported as saying:

"few people would defend ratepayers' money being spent on Party political propaganda."

She said:

"No one has ever suggested that this council has operated in this way."

How short memories are! In 1980, when the Government passed the Housing Bill to allow council houses to be sold to those tenants who wished to buy, my local authorities opposed the move to the end. A housing commissioner had

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to be put in. That political act by my local authority cost my constituents about £70,000. It was nothing but a party political campaign to oppose a law passed by Parliament.

No one could dispute the fact that the Clay Cross episode was another party political issue at the expense of the ratepayer. Is it a coincidence that my local authority spends money on its nuclear-free zone and that it spent money supporting the miners during the strike? Is it a coincidence that it mounts an open day just a week or two before local government elections to advertise and to impress the voters? That is nothing other than party political manipulation at the expense of the ratepayers.

To hear some Opposition Members speak one would think that in the Bill we are trying to make local government believe in behaving secretly. No one would believe that our committees and council meetings are open to the public. Those meetings can be reported openly as any municipal correspondent sees fit, showing what the local authority is doing and the policies in which it believes. There is nothing to hide. We want there to be no party politics of any colour on the rates issue. Let us return to local democracy for the people with a little less politicisation of local government.

8.58 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I disagree with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley). He believes that the lines pursued by a Labour council are party political but that those pursued by a Conservative council are not. I was a councillor 23 years ago in the urban district of Merton and Morden in south London. That was solidly controlled by the Conservative party. It was political to the extent that a capable man who had been on the council for over 20 years was not permitted to be chairman of the council because he was a member of the Labour party. All that council's actions were strongly political. It finally conceded, when it was to be wound up because of the London reorganisation in 1963 and 1964, and allowed him to be chairman for the penultimate year. It is fallacy to regard Tory councils as non-political.

The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) tried to give the impression that the Labour party has changed considerably and is now a party of extremists. That is absolute nonsense. The present party of extremism is the Conservative party that happens to be in government. The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate referred to local government under the rule of Morrison and other people of that era. He tended to give the impression that they were moderate. If Clem Attlee and Herbert Morrison were leading the party today and putting to the electorate the same programme as they did in 1945, the Conservative party that regarded Clem Attlee as a moderate would, because of the passage of time, be calling him an extremist.

Local government should have the right to defend services and publicise its activities. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) referred to the leaflet on buses and transport in his area. I should like to refer to the leaflet published by Lancashire county council in defence of an important section of local government service. There was nothing in that leaflet that was untrue. It put a fair case to the people whom it represented and it was right that it should be able to do that. Now that that Bill is an Act, the passage of time will show that what Lancashire county council and many other bodies publicised in leaflets and what we pointed out to the electorate was true and not as the Government portrayed.

The hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) tried to highlight complaints about the Greater London council. If the Government believed that those complaints were correct, why did they deprive the GLC electorate of an election? That is what matters; that is democracy. If the electorate agreed with the hon. Lady, it would have said to the Labour representatives controlling the GLC, "We do not want you. You are out." The Government did not want an election because the people would have voted for the Labour party and put it back into office.

In 1979, when the Conservative party was elected, it said that it wanted more freedom in local government. I find it amazing to recall that statement. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said, this is the 12th local government Bill since the Government took office. We have seen measures to curtail capital expenditure and revenue expenditure. Local government has more shackles put on it every year that the Conservative Government are in office. It is time that we thought again. Many local councillors are becoming disillusioned because they cannot implement the services for which they campaigned and were elected to put into effect. A local council should be able to say to the hundreds of people who apply for improvement and repair grants that it cannot even accept the applications and that they cannot have a grant because the Government are not making sufficient money available. Why should the local authority accept responsibility for the Government's action?

If we cannot provide enough sheltered and residential homes for the elderly because of Government policy, why should not local authorities be able to tell the electors that that is the position and say to them, "Blame the Government, not us"?

The Bill is not just vicious; it is daft. Clause 2 provides:

"(1) A local authority shall not publish any material which, in whole or part, appears to be designed to affect, or can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for —

(a) a political party, or

(b) a body, cause or campaign identified with, or likely to be regarded as identified with, a political party."

If that is what the Government intend, it will mean that local authorities cannot publicise anything that they do. Whichever party is in control of a local authority—be it Conservative, Liberal, SDP or Labour — will try to implement policies for the benefit of the electors whom it represents. The councillors will want to be re-elected, but they will not be able to publicise what they have done in the council's annual report or in the leaflet that goes with the rates bill, because it will be seen as trying to gain support for the party in office.

At the last election, about 40 per cent. of the votes were cast for the Conservative party. The majority of votes were cast for the Liberal, SDP and Labour parties. Those parties took almost the same line in the Transport Bill Committee. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that more people were against the Transport Bill than were in favour of it. Why should we not, therefore, be able to say what we wanted to do?

I have mentioned the leaflet that was published by Lancashire county council. Of the 14 districts in Lancashire, 13 took part in the campaign. Only three

authorities in Lancashire are Labour-controlled, but the others participated in the campaign to some degree. Local authorities have the right to defend the services that they have been elected to implement. They have the right to make people aware of what the Government are doing. If people disagree with what the controlling party on the local authority is doing, they will say, "We have had enough. We will put the other party in."

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Labour lost.

Mr. Pike: The Tory party, the Secretary of State and the Minister of State do not believe in local democracy or local government. The hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) from a sedentary position said that the Labour party lost the county election. Yes, it did, but the result was that it is still the largest party on the Lancashire county council.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Pike: The county council election results in Lancashire were extremely good, because, when the new boundaries were drawn at the time of local government reorganisation, the Tory party designed the boundaries so as to prevent Labour from ever winning control of the county. The Tories put the Labour areas in the south of the county into Merseyside or Greater Manchester. They had to find somewhere else for Warrington, the only Labour area in the middle, because it might have made Lancashire Labour. They pushed Warrington into Cheshire. The result was a victory for the Labour party in the local elections.

The Bill is vicious. I hope that it is withdrawn or defeated on Second Reading. If not, I hope that it suffers major amendment.

9.8 pm

Dr. Ian Twinn (Edmonton): The tradition of responsible behaviour in local government has broken down in some parts of the country. The Labour party has rejected the normal conventions of conduct in local government. In Edmonton, we look over the boundary at the behaviour of the leader of Haringey council, Bernie Grant, and we see the behaviour in local government that the Labour party condones. The Labour party has hijacked ratepayers' cash for party political aims. It is playing its own party political games with the taxpayers' money. We see the results of that in London and other cities. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) may say, "Bullshit". *[Interruption.]* My lip reading must be faulty. I am sure he did not say that and I withdraw that suggestion. The hon. Gentleman may have said rubbish or something like that. The truth of the matter is that that is what the Labour party is doing in local government.

I welcome clause 1 of this Bill, which imposes a duty to set a rate by 1 April. We have seen in London the consequences of councils not setting rates within a reasonable time. Not to set the rate in a reasonable time so that money comes in in a steady flow must be a form of madness or the result of the worst kind of cynicism about the public service. This year Southwark council lost an income of £500,000 through not setting the rate. The same thing happened in Lambeth and in other local councils.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) that there is a great worry in London about the response to be gained from the district auditor. The district auditor seems to have no teeth, and he appeared to be unwilling to act swiftly against the councils of inner London when they were behaving irresponsibly earlier this year in setting a rate. I encourage my right hon. Friend to consider at the Committee stage giving this Bill some teeth to ensure that councils face a penalty for not setting a rate.

Part 2 of the Bill is the meat of the proposals and I am sure that all Conservative Members join in my welcome for the proposal to cut down what had been a terrible growth in advertising, pamphlets, so-called newspapers and brochures which now stream through our letter boxes in London and in other cities. The growth in advertising and political propaganda is out of control. As my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) said, originally innocent powers have been usurped by the Labour party to be used for party political gain.

People who often face a life of political opposition in our inner cities in the Conservative party, the Social Democratic party or the Liberal party see money from their ratepayers being spent against the interests of those ratepayers to consolidate the position of one party which, as in the case of the London borough of Southwark, does not even have majority voting support from the electorate. Such propaganda is a most objectionable development in local government and is the spending of ratepayers' money for narrow party political interests.

Of course, this practice is not limited to local councils. It has spread much wider. It has spread to local voluntary groups, which are set up, often as front organisations, by the Labour party to spend more ratepayers' money to consolidate the position of the Labour party in particular areas. Perhaps I could mention two examples from the London borough of Southwark. I attempted, unsuccessfully, to become an elected member of that authority and have always followed its deliberations with great interest.

One of the organisations in the borough that I have always followed with interest is Southwark Entertainments. I do not know why Southwark council should spend ratepayers' money on running an entertainment business. In early November, it organised a bonfire and fireworks party in Peckham Rye in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). The entertainment was widely publicised and a leaflet was put around the borough of Southwark encouraging people to go. It was a pleasant, attractive leaflet, printed in Labour party colours. Unfortunately, when it was opened it was found to be full of party political propaganda.

That was paid for by the ratepayers of Southwark, but that was not all. The grand finale of the bonfire night was not some beautiful display of, for example, a fairy castle in fireworks. It was a party political message in fireworks which lit up across Peckham Rye and across Dulwich. It shocked and angered parents who had taken their children to watch what was advertised as an innocent bonfire and fireworks party. Parents were extremely cross that party politics had been brought into something like that. It was the most cynical misuse of the ratepayers' money.

An example of indirect spending by Southwark was the allocation of money to the Southwark youth festival. The festival was sponsored by Southwark and was run by the youth trade union rights campaign. The campaign was so Left-wing that it was chucked out of the Walworth road headquarters of the Labour party by the Leader of the

[Dr. Ian Twinn]

Opposition. That festival of pop groups was very interesting for those who went to it. It was not about pop groups; it was about naked party political propaganda on the rates. That is another example of the abuse of ratepayers' money by the Labour party.

I am pleased to support the measure and to think that it will be on the statute book by next May to stop the sort of misuse of ratepayers' money that we have seen in London.

9.15 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I congratulate the hon. Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) on an inadvertently entertaining speech. If he needs lip-reading lessons, I recommend my own teacher of lip-reading at the ILEA-financed City Literary Institute.

It has been a good debate. Many of my hon. Friends missed a peach of a speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). If any of my hon. Friends were frightened before the start of the debate about the implications of the Bill, they will now, having sat through the speeches of Conservative Members, be scared to death. It is clear that what Conservative Members think is in the Widdicombe report exists only in their fevered imagination. In speech after speech we had the reiteration of the old adage of the Conservative party, "I am not political, I am a Conservative". In their view, the term "political activities" applies only to the Opposition.

This is the first occasion when the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) has appeared as the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government. He made a memorable winding-up speech in July. He is one of the handful of people who understand the rate support grant system, and his appointment as Minister of State is well-deserved.

The Bill falls into four distinct parts. The least controversial is part IV, which provides for the payment of attendance allowances to members of ILEA and elected members of joint authorities established under the Local Government Act 1985, which received Royal Assent only four months ago. Clause 10 corrects an omission in the Act and we shall, of course support it.

Part III provides that local authorities may transfer mortgages only with the written consent of the mortgagor, and effectively prohibits authorities from entering into mortgage deals where the person or institution buying an authority's mortgage book can at a later date transfer it back to the authority concerned.

We shall examine the proposals in detail in Committee but there are two points that must be made now. The first is that clause 7 has retrospective effect to 24 July this year. Retrospective legislation should never be taken lightly, especially where, by such provisions as these, Parliament makes unlawful acts which were previously lawful. Indeed, it was the very Secretary of State who announced the proposal, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), who, as a young and thrusting Back Bencher, warned of the dangers of retrospection in a forensic speech. He knows all about slippery slopes. He said:

"If it is still legitimate to quote Virgil in this House, Facilis descensus Averni, which can be roughly, but not inaccurately, translated as 'retrospective legislation is a damned slippery slope'. Let the House dig its heels in and say that it will have no more of it".—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1965; Vol. 707, c. 1264.]

In this case——

Dr. Cunningham: Look what happened to him.

Mr. Straw: —there is no justification for making the measure retrospective because the mischief with which this provision aims to deal is small.

Our second objection to this Bill is that it is another example of local authorities being treated less favourably than institutions in the private sector occupying a similar position. If local authorities are to be prevented from making transfers without the consent of the householder at the time the transfer is made, so too should building societies and private landlords.

Part I of the Bill of requires that rating authorities should make their rates before 1 April. The Scottish authorities and the precepting authorities in England, like the counties, already have statutory deadlines by which they must set a rate. These have worked well in the past. We did not oppose the establishment of those deadlines and we shall not oppose the principle of this part of the Bill. We shall, of course reserve the right to make detailed comments in Committee on the operation and drafting of the measure.

What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The Government must recognise, as the Audit Commission has powerfully pointed out, that they have an equally powerful responsibility to help the local authority budgetary process by giving local authorities far greater notice of Government decisions that profoundly affect them, including the rate support grant and HIP allocation. The time scale that the Government impose on local authorities undermines effective planning and leads to great inefficiency and waste of resources.

Part II of the Bill is innocuously described as "Local Authority Publicity". We had a rehearsal of this debate in May 1984 on a ten-minute Bill moved by the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), then a humble Back Bencher and now translated to the august position, on which I congratulate her, of Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment.

Mr. Tony Banks: Hasn't she done well!

Mr. Straw: It may have been because of that debate. The hon. Lady's argument was well dealt with, in a witty and effective speech, by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) who mentioned the precedent set on 6 May 1782, when the House refused to pass Rumbold's Pains and Penalties Bill.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): The hon. Gentleman did not make it to the ministerial team.

Mr. Straw: In the debate of 1984 the hon. Lady said:

"At present, a local authority may provide—by whatever means it considers suitable — information relating to the services that it provides for its ratepayers. I believe that that is absolutely right."

She went on:

"Indeed, it is a fundamental tenet of good local government that councils should be required to explain openly the priorities that they set for local services.

The only restraint that I wish to impose on the section is on using money raised through taxes and rates for party political purposes."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1984; Vol. 60, c. *370*.]

If that was all that was at issue in this Bill there would be no argument. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland said earlier, the official evidence of the Labour

party in the interim report of the Widdicombe inquiry used almost exactly the same words as the hon. Lady. The party said:

"The Labour party has always agreed that ratepayers' money should not be used for explicit party political purposes, for example, in support of named candidates or in support of the Labour group or the Conservative group. Information moneys should properly be used to support and explain the policy of the authority as a whole."

This Bill goes far wider than anything that the hon. Lady claimed to have in mind, which is why all the local authority associations, including the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, oppose it.

This Bill makes a mockery of the recommendations of the interim report of the Widdicombe inquiry and unless fundamentally amended will undermine the freedom of expression of all local authorities and local councillors who dare to have views different from this Government.

Of the five members of the Widdicombe inquiry, two thought that the majority of members had gone too far. Sir Lawrence Boyle refused to sign the main interim report and Mr. Peter Newsam entered a note of dissent. However, even the Widdicombe majority recognised that local authorities have the right to express dissent. It said: "particularly in times of wide political differences, that our political system should accommodate the free expression of opposing views . . . In the recent context that includes issuing information about abolition and about rate capping."

In speech after speech we have heard Conservative Members denying the right of authorities, who are directly affected by the abolition and rate-capping measures, to express a view publicly on their opposition to those measures. The Widdicombe inquiry also rejected the ludicrous notion, contained in the Department of the Environment's evidence, that a distinction could be drawn between

"material of a political and a non-political nature."

The committee explicitly endorsed the view of the then Conservative-controlled Association of County Councils which said:

"Local authorities are essentially political bodies elected on political mandates, and run by politicians. Political considerations must affect the balance of the individual decisions they reach — and that applies to Conservative councils taking decisions on privatisation as much as Labour authorities reaching conclusions on, say, the right to buy. Therefore, we cannot simply stop local authorities acting politically."

The Government have ignored all that and, through clause 2, would prohibit the expression of political views by a terrifyingly wide provision. Clause 2 does not prohibit just the publication of any material that

"appears to be designed to affect . . . public support for a political party,"

but also prohibits any material designed to affect public support for

"a body, cause or campaign identified with, or likely to be regarded as identified with a political party."

It gets worse. Clause 2 establishes a subjective catch-all test which, on the best advice that we have received, seems likely to prohibit authorities from entering the debate in any area of political controversy. By that test, material that "can reasonably be regarded as likely to affect, public support for

(a) a political party, or

(b) a body, cause or campaign identified with, or likely to be regarded as identified with, a political party"

is also prohibited. The question that flows from this is, what will authorities be allowed to say? As the Association of County Councils correctly said, local authorities are political organisations. There is scarcely a single decision of any moment made by any authority in the land when the consequences of that decision upon public support for or against the political party in control of the council is not an important factor. Whether it is a matter of whether the opening hours of a public library should be reduced, or whether a bus stop should be moved, to the size of the rate increase, or the council housing programme, councillors ask themselves, "How will this decision affect public support for the political party of which I am a member?" Rightly so, for sensitivity to the electorate lies at the heart of the democratic process.

Mr. Marlow: Why does not the hon. Gentleman understand that local councillors are entitled to get on local radio and to stand up in council and to get their views into the press? They can put their political views across—they do not need bucketloads of ratepayers' money, which should be spent on services, to do so.

Mr. Heffer: I am sick of seeing Lady Porter.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend says that he is sick of seeing Lady Porter's photograph. As a ratepayer in Westminster, he is entitled to be, because Westminster city council has put out hundreds of sheets of propaganda in support of the abolition of the GLC. It is entitled to do so.

We are not talking about oodles of money. The amount of money that local authorities have spent on what is alleged to be party political campaigning is tiny compared with the abuse of the Government and Civil Service machine in support of the partisan interests of this Government.

Widdicombe acknowledged that local authorities were fully justified in campaigning against abolition and ratecapping. Both were bipartisan campaigns. The Conservative group on the GLC opposed abolition and all of the local authority associations oppose the Rates Act 1984. However, in voicing their legitimate opposition to those policies, those authorities were bound to affect public support for the Government, irrespective of whether they wanted to. Opposition to the Transport Bill, which my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) mentioned, is another case in point. According to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer), what Leicester city council had to say against the Transport Bill is somehow in support of a political party and should therefore be prohibited.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: It was in Lancashire.

Mr. Straw: I know what happened in Lancashire—with the support of the Conservative group the council drew attention to the terrifying consequences of the Transport Bill. Are authorities to be denied the right to represent their people, because that seems to be the implication? Recently Birmingham city council campaigned to site the grand prix road race in its area, and it is now campaigning to host the Olympic games. Is it to be denied the opportunity to campaign in that way? The Minister shakes his head, but in doing so the authority uses its wide powers under section 142, which are about to be wholly constricted by the Bill.

The Government have ignored the Widdicombe committee in another respect. It was argued before the committee that section 142 should be restricted solely to giving information about local authorities' specific services, but the committee said explicitly that the present scope of section 142, enabling an authority

[Mr. Straw]

"to provide information on matters relating to local government", was not too wide, and should stand.

The report continued

"We think that local authorities should be entitled to inform those living in their areas of the consequences of proposed changes in or affecting local government. In the past, it is clear that the abolition of authorities, or boundary changes, have been regarded as legitimate areas of concern for local authorities. The fight put up by the little County of Rutland . . . (or in Scotland, Fife) is perhaps the best known example. Under its conventions, the Government of the day is entitled to provide information about its proposed legislation and its likely effect: it seems to us only equitable that bodies affected, in this case local authorities, should have the right to provide information in reply."

Again, that is ignored. Section 142 is to be restricted solely to information relating to the functions of the authority.

Leaving aside arguments about the scale, tone and presentation of publicity, does the Minister not agree with Widdicombe that the new restriction on section 142 would have prevented local authorities from effectively voicing their opposition to rate capping or abolition, and would prevent them from voicing their opposition to any forthcoming controversial contents of their Green Paper on the reform of the rates? If not, what is the purpose of clauses 2 and 3, and why have they been drawn so widely?

Given the extent of the opposition from local authorities and all local authority associations, it was a surprise to hon. Members present to listen to the Liberal spokesman — throughout the debate there has not been a single SDP Member present. The speech of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was extraordinary, even for him, in terms of the arguments he advanced in favour of the proposition with which he finally concluded — that he and the alliance would vote in favour of the Bill. It is surprising in two respects.

In the Association of County Councils, the Liberals have opposed the Bill. On 17 October 1985 the leading Liberal county councillor in Lancashire, a national figure, as the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) will confirm, Councillor Tony Greaves, who runs the Association of Liberal Councillors, spoke and voted in favour of a resolution by Lancashire county council rejecting the majority report of Widdicombe and supporting the minority report.

I must tell my hon. Friends who missed the gem of a speech from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey the arguments that he advanced in support of the Bill. He said that legislatively the Bill was a minefield, but that he would vote in favour of it. That was him at his softest. He then said that the Bill was dangerous and threatened democracy, but that he would vote in favour of it. He said that clause 4 was horrendous and arbitrary, but that he would vote in favour of the Bill. He said of clause 2, the centrepiece of the Bill, that it was appalling and extreme, but that he would vote in favour of the Bill. I warn my hon. Friends to beware of Liberal Members bearing gifts.

This Bill has been born not of principle but of malice and neurosis. It is Thatcher's revenge for the fact that, while the Government won the vote on rate capping and the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan counties, they spectacularly lost the arguments. Nothing lays bare the Government's motives more than their double standards and the contrast between the restrictions they are now to impose on the freedom of expression of local authorities compared with the increasing licence they have taken to abuse the Exchequer's purse in support of the narrow, partisan interests of the Conservative party.

A sum of £2·5 million was spent on publicising the right to buy. Was not that publicity designed to "affect public support for a political party"? Just before the last election, the Secretary of State for Defence established a whole unit of civil servants explicitly to campaign against CND and in favour of the Tories' defence policies. Was not that in favour of a political party? A total of £70 million a year is spent on what are euphemistically described as Government information services, which are increasingly subject to direct control by the Prime Minister's press officer, Mr. Bernard Ingham. Is not that massive sum spent in support of a political party?

What are we to make of an announcement in the *Financial Times* on Saturday — the Secretary of State missed this one—under the heading, "Government plans advertising jobs campaign"? It said:

"Three agencies have been invited by the Central Office of Information . . . to present suggested campaigns in three weeks' time . . . The rush to appoint an agency, according to the department, is to tie in with current related campaigns".

No bones are made about the purpose of this expenditure by the British taxpayer. The report baldly states:

"The Government is to mount an advertising campaign to publicise its actions to counter unemployment".

Is not that campaign plainly designed to affect public support for a political party? Is not it designed to persuade the British public that, far from having the worst unemployment record of any of the major industrialised countries, unemployment is going down rather than up? Is not that using taxpayers' money to mount the start of the Conservative's general election platform, and would not such a campaign be specifically prohibited under clause 2 of the Bill if a local authority tried to run anything like it?

The Government established the Widdicombe inquiry with the aim of "strengthening local democracy". What a mockery they have made of that aim and of the Widdicombe report. Democracy is about according rights to those with whom one profoundly disagrees, and rights are not rights unless they can be fully exercised. This Bill strikes at the heart of the most important right of all— the right to express dissent and the right to be heard doing so. It strikes at the heart of local democracy, and it must be opposed.

9.37 pm

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): On behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I thank the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) for his kind words about my right hon. Friend's promotion. I should like to thank also the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) for his kind words about myself. I am sure that it is the quality of our opposition that has led to our dramatic rise. I also thank the hon. Member for Copeland for his generous words about my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin). They will be much appreciated.

After that things went downhill. The Opposition gave a most curious performance. There are two plans to their speeches—A and B. They shift from one to the other, depending on how they are doing. Plan A is to complain about the end of local government as we know it and the silencing of the voice of democracy — of Livingstone, Hatton, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr.

Banks), and so on. It is argued that the great political campaigns are now at an end and that the voice of local democracy has been stilled. The hon. Member for Copeland, with his well-known enjoyment of the countryside, described it as a silent spring.

When that plan is not going well, the other plan is to say that it is all unnecessary because there is no political campaigning at all. The Opposition then argue that all this is nonsense, that the Bill affects nothing and it is quite unnecessary.

There is something of a contradiction between these two arguments. It is either the end of social civilisation as we know it for the 12th time or whatever, or it does not really affect anything because it is all quite unnecessary.

The hon. Member for Copeland developed that a little. He said that perhaps a little bit of a baby was born from these publicity budgets. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West put paid to that, because he put the figure of £7,676,000 on his particular baby, and that seems to be quite a considerable baby. The hon. Members for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) and for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) tried that line, too, and said that it is all de minimis; the councils do not spend very much. Luckily for me, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, as always, was present — although he has slipped away now—and gave us the figures.

Much the same arguments were deployed about the other principal parts of the Bill, in particular the dates for a rate and mortgage sales. Apparently, on the one hand, they are unnecessary because all local authorities are responsible. On the other hand, they are said to be the most terrible infringement of local authority rights. Labour Members cannot have it both ways. The truth, as many of my hon. Friends said, is that most local authorities will be quite unaffected by the Bill, because they already carry out their affairs in a way that coincides with the traditions of the Bill. But, sadly — and the hon. Members for Copeland and for Blackburn probably already know this better than any other hon. Member because they have had certain discussions recently with their colleagues in Liverpool—sweet reason and consensus politics in some parts of the local authority world simply do not work. If the House needed a reminder of that today—and I do not think it does — the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) provided one. For some obscure reason, unknown to me, he was bitten, in terms of the factions of the Left, by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, and that gives us hope for the future.

My hon. Friends the Members for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson) and for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) expressed the view that we have moved out of a world where traditional conventions work. That is sad, but true. Again, in admirable speeches, my hon. Friends the Members for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh), for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Merchant), for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) and for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) have emphasised that view.

It was possibly the saddest moment in the debate when my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South said that the old concept of public service in local government seems to be dead in so many authorities. He had gone into local authority in pursuit of public service, as had many hon. Members, but when he was saying that a voice from the Opposition said "How naive." If that is naivety, I pay tribute to it, because it is a spirit of service that has given local government its reputation. It is, of course, by trading on that reputation for impartiality that councillors want now to fight their political campaigns. In that cry of "How naive" there was a clear definition of what has gone wrong.

One of the least controversial aspects of the Bill concerns attendance allowances. Nobody seems to mind giving more money to those who serve on the ILEA—undoubtedly they deserve it. Then there is 'date for a rate'. I was glad to have the support of the Opposition Front Bench on this issue, and I have no doubt that its occupants will question me about the details. We believe it to be a sensible step to take. I tell my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that the proposals will strengthen from the district auditor, who will have to establish whether there has been a loss and whether that loss is wilful. In establishing whether the loss has been wilful, it will assist him greatly if the dates have been passed. This is a useful step.

As for mortgages——

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak) *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that, like the hon. Member for Blackburn, I should not give way. Otherwise, I shall run out of time, but—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Straw: I did give way.

Mr. Waldegrave: Well then, I shall too.

Mr. Hawkins: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. The district auditor's teeth are fewer than many hon. Members realise. I raised with him the problem of Derbyshire county council printing school stationery containing a political slogan to the effect that the county council supports nuclear-free zones. It seems to be far worse to misuse education to subject children to propaganda than to use money for advertising. Will the Bill prevent Derbyshire county council from misusing education in that way? If it will not in its present form, will my hon. Friend consider amending it in Committee?

Mr. Waldegrave: Specific cases are better examined in Committee when there is time to debate them in detail. I hope that examples of the sort that my hon. Friend is talking about will be outlawed. The district auditor should not be dismissed. He carries out his duties separately and independent of Government. It became clear during the debate that some Labour Members consider him to be rather less toothless than do some of my hon. Friends.

Dr. Cunningham: If, under a future Government, an inquiry into local government reorganisation recommended the abolition of the shire counties, is the Minister saying that they would not be able to campaign against that proposal?

Mr. Waldegrave: I did not take that to be my hon. Friend's example. I am sure that we shall debate these issues in Committee. If a campaign against a proposal to abolish the shire counties were carried out in a non-party political way, that would be perfectly proper. Labour Members seem to have missed the fact that the Bill is aimed at authorities using ratepayers' money for party political campaigns. There will be plenty of scope within the rules for local government to put across information about its concerns. Many of the campaigns that have come to our notice during the past year or so will be outlawed.

The Government are in agreement with the arguments of the hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for

[Mr. Waldegrave]

Blackburn on mortgages. When we were considering the abolition Bill, as it then was—the Local Government Bill—in Committee they said that mortgages should be transferable only to residuary bodies, which is fair enough. I do not think that the retrospective point is real. Transfers that had taken place by 23 July, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his announcement, will not be affected, and no one will lose any vested right. I am glad that that was welcomed by the hon. Member for Rhondda. I think that there will be some cross-party support for the principle.

The hon. Members for Rhondda and for Blackburn, in effect, say, "Why not extend the provision more widely?" That argument cannot be directed to building societies, because you could not compel someone to join a particular society. I am not sure that we should be too chary about saying that in this area the public sector should behave rather better than the private sector. That is an argument that we often hear advanced by Labour Members.

Despite what has been said by Labour Members, the steps that we are taking in the Bill are based on paragraph 228, and others, of the Widdicombe report. I shall not quote paragraph 228 in its entirety, but part of it reads:

"We wish to rule out such practices as . . .

(d) publicity campaigns, the scale of which, given their political context, may have the effect of advancing the interests of a particular party even though the subject matter is not overtly party political."

I have no doubt that I shall face pressure from some of my right hon. and hon. Friends to go further than the Bill as it stands. The Government could have brought forward such proposals, but, instead, we have introduced in good faith what we believe to be a sensible plan of action that is based on the intentions set out in the Widdicombe report.

There is a certain irony in the sudden conversion of the hon. Member for Blackburn to the Widdicombe report. When it first became available, the hon. Gentleman did not care for it at all. He issued a press statement in which he claimed that it was weak in its analysis and potentially dangerous in its conclusions. I am glad that he has now come to the conclusion that it is a sensible basis for action. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) went a step further. In contributing to the debate he raised its tone by deploying some Shakespearean quotations. When I saw him in his place, with the hon. Member for Newham, North-West sitting behind him, and listened to the eloquence of his opening sentences, I thought:

"here's grace and a cod-piece; that's a wise man and a fool."

As the right hon. Gentleman continued, he seemed to step further back in King Lear:

"Pat he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy".

The right hon. Gentleman gave us quite a long account in describing the need to set up a committee. We set up a committee and it produced an 84-page report. The right hon. Gentleman, after quite a prolonged speech, ended with a slightly unfair and rather offensive attack on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I drifted back to Richard II, and thought:

"I wasted time, and now time wastes me."

The point about the voluntary organisations and the Birmingham grand prix seems to have been missed by the Opposition. That is understandable because they read only the briefs handed to them. The definition of political activity comes from the Companies Act 1985 which goes back to the Companies Act 1967, passed by a Labour Government.

There will be plenty of room under section 142 of the Local Government Act 1972 for local authorities to distribute proper information about their activities. They will be able to publicise the services offered by voluntary organisations which provide a bona fide service in their area. There is no need for simulated panic and horror stories. Birmingham's grand prix campaign will be safe under the Bill.

The Bill is aimed at the party political misuse of local government information. That is the reason for the uproar and caterwauling. If we were not hitting the target that we hoped to hit, not so many Labour Members would have attended today's debate—and only a dozen or so have attended anyway.

Honest Opposition Members — there are plenty of them—know that there is a real problem. For example, Ms. Margaret Pedler runs a Labour propaganda organisation called the local government information unit. She said that what we were doing was a disgrace because the Bill might make it more difficult for her propaganda to be funded from the rates. She said that we were using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. That lets the cat out of the bag. Who is this nut? I think that she is being offensive. She cannot surely be referring to the great and good Mr. Livingstone or the great and good Mr. Hatton. She has let slip that all sensible people on the Labour side know that there is a good nut to crack. One receives so many nods and winks on the matter from moderate Labour people that it is quite embarrassing.

I do not apologise for employing a sledgehammer rather than a feather duster to crack the nut. I am not sure that we would make much progress with Mr. Hatton, for example, with a feather duster. Perhaps the hon. Member for Copeland has been tickling him somewhere. These matters have to be dealt with clearly and decisively by the House. That is exactly what we are doing.

The other way of checking whether we are on the right lines is to discover who is against us. If certain dogs do not bark in the night, I think that we should go back to the drawing board to see whether we can make them bark.

We must study *The Guardian*. A Mr. Delaney wrote to *The Guardian* saying that this was disgraceful and frightening. We discovered that Mr. Delaney was one or other of the Mr. Delaneys of Delaney, Fletcher and Delaney, the advertising agency which publicises Ms. Margaret Pedler and her local government information unit. We were on the right track.

We now come to my colleague and friend Mr. Pannick, a fellow of All Souls college. He also wrote to *The Guardian*. We were on target because it was as surprising to find my colleague Mr. Pannick against us as it would be to find Mr. Leslie Rowse opining that there was something lacking in modern Shakespearian scholarship. He is not generally on our side. We are on the right lines.

I was worried because we had heard not a word from Mr. Livingstone. But, fear not, out came the press notices. He says that the Government will cause him serious problems. I do not think that we need to worry about that.

Those are the people who are against us. It is a pretty good collection.

Who are the people who are with us? Here the story becomes a little more difficult. The hon. Member for Copeland rightly spotted a matter of difficult definition:

are the Liberals with us or against us? We know that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) has been a major contributor to this debate. He has been here all day, listening quietly. He will not be recorded in *Hansard*, but he is here in spirit. He took up his typewriter with its large type face, indicative of high office, wrote to the Prime Minister, and said:

"I enclose some material which I believe to be simply party political propaganda sent out at ratepayers' expense."

Indeed, it is. It is a lot of nonsense. He continued:

"I believe this to be a highly improper use of public funds and I should be most grateful if you could let me know what action your Government intends to take to prevent further abuses of the Local Government Act."

If he had been here, we could have told him. That is what the Bill is all about.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey was sort of with us and sort of not with us. He was like Mr. Gaitskell on one famous occasion, to which the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent was a contributor. He did not say yes and he did not say no. That was rather sad. We had hoped that the descendants of Gladstone and of those who drove corruption out of the management of money in national elections would have decided upon which side of this fence they would like to come down.

Several hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Rhondda and for Blackburn, said that the same conventions ought to govern central Government as govern local government. I do not wholly dissent from that point of view. I have here the kind of thing that is allowed at the moment under the convention that governs local government. One can issue a full-page advertisement of the Prime Minister's face, and produce badges which refer to rate capping, and to

"service-slashing, job-axing, money-grabbing Thatcher."

That is Hackney.

I have here also an example of what is allowed under the conventions that govern central Government. My Department thought that it would look into this question of persuasion, and it published a pamphlet about the Rates Act. It is a very fine pamphlet. It is entirely true.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Waldegrave: The document that the hon. Gentleman is holding in his hand was not put though people's letter-boxes. It was placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer), to whom it is always a pleasure to listen and whose conviction and power of oratory has always impressed me, knows a great deal more about history and English literature than many other right hon. and hon. Members. He will therefore, I hope, allow me to make just a small historical discursus. In 1835 a Royal Commission found:

"In general, the corporate funds are but partially applied to the municipal purposes, such as the preservation of the peace by an efficient police, or in watching or in lighting the town, but they are frequently expended in feasting and paying the salaries of incompetent officers."

It was a Conservative Government—that of Peel—with the same sort of radicalism as the present one that dealt with that matter. I am afraid that the House of Lords—as happened in those days but never happens now—made rather a fool of itself and tried to reject the Bill. But that was dealt with. Mr. Peel sent for the Duke of Wellington, and it was all organised. That was the famous turtle soup scandal. I believe that today we are dealing with the modern version of the turtle soup scandal. People have got their noses into the municipal trough. Our objective is to get their noses out. Just as Peel cleaned up the turtle soup and Gladstone the national elections, I have great pride in bringing before the House a Bill which is aimed at stopping this new municipal turtle soup corruption.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 285, Noes 176.

Division No. 6] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael

Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ian Lang and
Mr. Tony Durant

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger

Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. John McWilliam.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Liverpool

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

10.13 pm

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): A moment ago, I saw the Secretary of State for the Environment in the Chamber. I would have thought that he would have stayed to hear what I consider to be an important and urgent debate. I hope that he will return to hear it, because I wished to present my case to him. No doubt he will read with great interest much of what has been said today by my hon. Friends. I hope that, at the meeting tomorrow, he will begin to recognise the problems of Merseyside, and especially those of Liverpool.

The problems of Liverpool in particular and Merseyside in general did not begin with the election of a Labour council in 1983. I was born in Liverpool in 1923 in the heart of the slums of that city. During all my life there I experienced, worked and lived with and went to school in abject poverty and misery. Throughout that period, Liverpool city council was in the hands of the Tories, and that remained the position until the late post-war period.

The wealth of the city was built on the ports—on commerce, shipbuilding and ship repairing—and the merchant princes and shipowners built massive monuments to the prosperity that accrued to them. Those monuments are still to be seen in the form of Liverpool pierhead, William Brown street, the Walker art gallery and George's hall. There are many monuments to the prosperity that was brought about by the working classes of Liverpool. Those buildings and monuments, beautiful though some of them are, overlooked—as they still overlook—some of the worst slums in western Europe.

The people lived in the slums, in rat-infested properties, in cellars and in basements. Anybody who wants to learn the history of Liverpool need only read the reports of the medical officers of health for those years, with details of the infantile mortality rates, at one time the highest in the nation. One reads of the number of deaths between birth and fifteen, of the disease-ridden areas where children who survived had to be strong indeed. The weak went under. The hearse was a daily visitor through the cobbled streets of Liverpool taking away children who died from malnutrition and the diseases that were rampant in the city at that time.

They were the worst possible conditions that human beings ever suffered, yet that was at the heart of great prosperity in a great port. The working class of Merseyside and Liverpool did not benefit from that greatness. There were large armies of unskilled casual labour in the docks, with 20,000-plus men going out every day trying to earn a living, working one day and being unemployed the next. In shipbuilding and ship repairing, the same state of affairs existed, with men working part-time, trying to feed their families on the pittance that they were paid.

I was part of that. My first job on leaving school was in a boot warehouse in Scotland road. I received the princely sum of 6s 6d a week, which went towards the budget of my family. I was one of the many thousands of kids in Liverpool who were in the same position. When I went to sea at the age of 14½, I found an even worse world among the seamen. They were living in absolutely dreadful conditions, yet many Liverpool people had to find their living by going to sea.

[Mr. Eddie Loyden]

That is the backcloth to the city of Liverpool. Remember, I am talking not of a thousand years ago or even of the Victorian era. The slums were there long after the war. I recall the misery of the courts, with 12 people to a court, with one tap and one lavatory at the end of each court for that number of people. That was the extent of disregard that the Tory council and Tory Government had for the working class of that and many other cities.

After the war, Liverpool had high hopes for the future as the slums began to be cleared and industries came to Liverpool and Merseyside. A new dawn had broken, in the view of the people of the city. But over the years, running into the 1970s, we saw the role played by the Liberal party, with an era of hung councils, Tory-Liberal administrations and one financial cut after another, all against a backcloth of poverty, misery and rising unemployment. They, too, have a clear responsibility for the situation in Merseyside, especially in Liverpool. Their targets, pitched so low were at fault. Not a single public sector house was built in the four years when the Liberal party was in office. The Liberal council had no regard for the misery and poverty of the people. It was rightly kicked out, to bring in a council that was prepared to do something.

I am not suggesting that the whole post-war housing development was the fault of the Liberals. There were faults long before then. People were condemned to live in the misery of high-rise flats and houses unfit for families to be reared in. The then Government contributed to those conditions. In the 1970s, the Liberals saw even more clearly than the Tories that it was a case of cutting the rates in a city that needed more public and private investment. They disregarded that, and they paid the penalty.

In 1983, the Labour party came to power. It was prepared to tackle those problems, many of them for the first time. Labour councillors began to tackle the problems of the housing estates and high-rise flats. They began to put parks in working-class areas where they were needed and where they had not been before. They built sports centres in working class areas where people had never seen such centres. Those acts are now judged criminal. The retention in work of people who are not prepared to be added to the lengthening dole queues in Liverpool is regarded as a criminal act.

The leader of Liverpool city council, who is a Quaker and who would not offend the law under any circumstances, has been pressed by the Government's actions into a position where he is called a criminal in the technical sense of the word. It is a scandal and a shame that honest and decent men in Liverpool fighting against the ongoing decline of the city and trying to push back the barriers of poverty and misery are condemned as criminals by the Government.

The final push that moved Liverpool to the brink was made by the Government. They have the main responsibility. This country is still wealthy. The 500,000 people who live in Liverpool are British citizens—they are not an alien force. They are part of the United Kingdom and are therefore the Government's responsibility. The Secretary of State and the Government cannot stand aside and see Liverpool swinging in the air waiting for someone to cut the rope so that it can drop. Neither can Liverpool be seen in isolation. The city is a microcosm of what is happening in all our major cities, especially the old industrial cities in the northern regions. If no immediate action is taken, this country will reap a whirlwind that we have not seen in this or in previous centuries.

Recent statements have been made in the Stonefrost report and by the Secretary of State. Usually, the Secretary of State conducts his dialogue about 240 miles away from Liverpool. He has never attempted to meet councillors around the table to discuss the problems. He has not attempted to recognise the enormity and seriousness of the crisis in the city.

No Government have the right to disregard the plight of a major city and its population as this Government are doing. Whatever the council does—if it fiddles around with its budget and increases rates by 15 per cent. or, in reality 24 per cent. — commerce and industry are threatening that they will fold up their tents and go if rents rise in Liverpool. On numerous occasions they have said that the margin upon which they work will become intolerable and they will go away.

Do the Government want to conduct a vendetta against the people on Liverpool city council, the majority of whom are not members of Militant Tendency but Labour party members? They are youthful and dynamic and want to tackle the city's problems. Are the Government waiting for the city to surrender to them and to the Secretary of State because they do not like the faces or the behaviour of some of the people? That is infantile behaviour, which is not expected of a Secretary of State—even a Tory Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State must recognise that the problem will not go away. The crisis will be there tomorrow and the next day unless the Government intervene and say that they will have discussions with the Labour-controlled city council to enable the city to continue the good work that it has been doing to ease tension where tension has been growing. It has done everything it can to relieve those tensions. We all say that we are worried about inner cities and about what we have seen over the past two years or longer. Tension arises from the conditions in which people live.

The city has remained the same throughout two world wars. It has always had double the level of national unemployment. That is the story of Liverpool to which the Government and the Secretary of State must listen. No Government can disregard the need for intervention to put the city on its feet and enable the council to do its necessary job.

10.26 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I welcome the opportunity provided by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) to discuss the grim situation now facing the people of Liverpool. I listened this afternoon to the speeches of the hon. Members for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) and for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). There can be no doubt of the sincerity and the passion felt by those hon. Members. I only wish that the object of their fury and passion was better defined.

For the first time in this country, a city has been deliberately brought to the edge of collapse by those who run it — the very people who should have its best interests at heart. A council's tactics of confrontation threaten to put at risk the elderly and handicapped, to close schools and allow rubbish to pile up in the streets. The slogan of those councillors is:

"No cuts in jobs, services and housing programmes."

The result of their campaign will be no services, 31,000 employees out of work and the housing programme, by which the councillors set so much store, in jeopardy. Any right-minded person must be appalled at the idiotic abuse of the trust placed by the people of Liverpool in their councillors.

Throughout, the Government have urged the council to resolve the crisis. The council has always been able to do so and it still can now. The keynote of my speech is that the council can still draw back from the brink. It must pull back now.

The hon. Member for Garston is one of those who wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last Thursday asking him to meet the city council to discuss the position. My right hon. Friend made it clear, as he has done on many previous occasions, that he is not prepared to meet the city council until it behaves responsibly and legally. The hon. Member for Walton has said that he wished it were possible for us to have rational and civilised discussion. The council could, if it was prepared to set a proper rate.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is the hon. Lady advocating a rate increase? If she is, that is strange phenomenon for a Conservative Minister.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Member will find out exactly what I am advocating as I progress with my speech. My right hon. Friend has agreed to meet the hon. Members from Liverpool later this week, and in the light of what I say this evening, I hope that hon. Members will not come in the expectation that the Government will bail out the city council.

It is worth reminding the House how today's situation arose. Since the time of its election in May 1983, the Militant-dominated council in Liverpool has deliberately sought confrontation with the Government. Of that there can be no shadow of doubt, and hon. Members need not take my word for it.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): The hon. Lady, like her hon. Friends and others—unfortunately, sometimes in my own party—consistently talks about a Militant-dominated city council. It is not true, it never has been true, and it is time people stopped telling lies about it.

Mrs. Rumbold: I know that the hon. Member for Walton believes that there are only a few Militant members on Liverpool city council. If that were the case, if the majority of the councillors are moderate, as he claims they are, why do they not prevail upon their colleagues to behave in a responsible manner?

In an open letter to the people of Liverpool, the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition talked of the attack on the city of Liverpool and its people being perpetrated by

"A political grouping which, by its dogma and by its deliberate refusal to adopt the common Labour course of setting realistic rates, has added a new level of crisis; an extra layer of anxiety to the problems already endured by the people of this deprived city."

Last year, similar confrontations took the form of months of political posturing, leading to a long-delayed rate within a balanced budget. It was merely a preview of this year's events, the only difference being that the council withdrew from the brink in July. Moreover, there were no massive concessions from the Government as the propaganda from Liverpool city council claimed at that time.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The hon. Lady is talking about what happened last year. Will she reflect on the letter from the previous Secretary of State for the Environment to the leader of the city council, Councillor John Hamilton, in which the Secretary of State said he would endeavour to see that there would be better investment in housing and that the housing investment programme would be improved? Will the hon. Lady tell the House the figures for the Government's housing investment programme in Liverpool last year and also tell us what it is this year? Has her right hon. Friend kept his word?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Member will see that my right hon. Friend has indeed kept his word.

The Government warned the council last year that its problems were not over. We urged it to look at all available sources to help solve Liverpool's social and economic problems — the private sector, the local communities and the housing associations. The council ignored that advice, and clung to its dogmatic approach, apparently in the entirely mistaken belief that the Government would respond to blackmail if the council threatened to take its city into chaos.

This year, the council again refused to set a rate at the start of the financial year. When it eventually got around to setting a rate, it was set far too low to cover a grossly inflated budget of £265 million. By adopting this budget, the council, by its own choice, reduced its grant entitlement for the year by nearly £90 million. It left a gap of over £100 million between income and expenditure. Just as we had done last year, the Government urged the council to put its finances in order by reducing expenditure and tackling inefficiency and waste, but because of the way in which the grant system works, the council can gain roughly an extra £2 million in grant for every £1 million by which it reduces expenditure.

At the end of July, the council made its first tentative moves towards a lower budget, showing that it could do it. It reduced its planned spending by £10 million and immediately became entitled to a further £22·6 million in grant. That was a start, but it was not enough. It was up to the council to reduce expenditure further to a credible level. The council did so in September and this time claimed to have balanced the books, but only by the extraordinary tactic of making the entire work force redundant. That was from a Labour council claiming to care for its employees.

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broad Green): The Minister says that we have to create economies in the expenditure of Liverpool city council. The only way to do that is to cut services and jobs. The terms of carrying out the Government's diktat have been worked out by the Liverpool city treasurer. Can the Minister explain the logic and the mathematics of it? Were the Government prepared to give us £67 million in grants for sacking 10,000 workers, plus £60 million in unemployment benefit, plus £10 million in redundancy payments for sacking those same workers? That is the only way in which it can be done.

Mrs. Rumbold: Anyone who knows anything about local government finance knows that it is possible to make

[Mrs. Rumbold]

savings without reducing jobs and cutting services. It is possible for a council to make such reductions if it has the will to do it. No such will has been demonstrated by the Liverpool city council.

Immediately after the Liverpool city council's decision to make the work force redundant, the NUT challenged the decision in court and the court ruled that the teachers' notices were invalid. Subsequently the council has repeatedly promised to withdraw all redundancy notices but has not yet done so. Now the NUT has applied to the court to have the rate quashed, opening the way for the council to make a new one at a proper level. We shall have to wait and see what happens.

It is not only the Government who are urging the council to put its house in order. With the co-operation of the council, the Labour party and the national unions gave four local government finance experts a remit to investigate the finances of the authority, but the council's support ended as soon as it became known that the treasurers' report did not go the council's way because it showed that Liverpool could still sort out its own finances.

The report has been welcomed by almost everyone except the council. All the council has done is tell its work force that they will not be paid after Thursday, and to continue with the totally unrealistic assertion that the crisis is the Government's fault and that the Government should step in to help it out.

By failing to act on the conclusions of the Stonefrost report, the council has exhausted the patience even of those who were trying to help it — the unions, the Labour party and other local authorities. Today, just three days before many of the city's 31,000 employees are set to receive their last pay packets, the TGWU workers called on the council to compromise and to set a 15 per cent. rate increase to balance its books. The TGWU has 1,000 members working for the council, and with the second biggest union, NALGO, and the teachers' unions all having rejected the Labour group's tactics, today's vote must be seen by all to be a major setback.

The only way to win the battle for money from central Government was by a united campaign by city workers, and that has clearly not developed. They have called on the council to balance its books through the Stonefrost report recommendations. If only the council would do that, there could be some salvation. The Leader of the Opposition said:

"the report demonstrates conclusively that there was never any justification for seeking to sack or lay off 31,000 workers, or for claiming that in order to balance its budget, Liverpool city council would have to lay off thousands of workers, cut services and devastate its housing programme. Playing politics with people's jobs must cease and political dogma must give way to realism."

I am glad to be able to record complete agreement with the Labour party. That is just what the Government have been saying all along. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has also said:

"The report shows clearly that it is within the competence and discretion of the City Council to resolve this crisis now".

I can easily understand the exasperation underlying his statement:

"The options were there all the time for people who really wanted to find them".

The council's unhappy officials have known and stated clearly the options all along, but council leaders do not want to listen. For pure political dogma, Liverpool council leaders refuse to accept reality. They have shrugged off all attempts to help them. They are on their own because they have chosen to be so.

In all this, it is the people of Liverpool and the council's employees for whom we must feel most concern. The bishops in Liverpool recognise the suffering which may be caused as a result of the militant policies of confrontation. in October they wrote:

"Militant's intransigence and unwillingness to engage in serious dialogue creates divisiveness and uncertainty in which the most vulnerable elements of the community suffer, usually schoolchildren and elderly people unable to cope with a reduction of services . . . . We deplore the confrontation that has to a great extent been manufactured by the Militant Leadership of the City Council".

While we all agree that Liverpool has very serious economic and social problems, the council's claim that it is under-funded just does not stand up. More than £1 billion of Government money was put into Merseyside last year. In rate support grant and urban programme, Liverpool has received £1,800 per head of population since 1979. In contrast, Birmingham has received only £1,400. The council could have had more Government support, which it has deliberately decided to forgo. By spending way over target, it has forfeited rate support grant, and some of the £2·5 million extra urban programme money found for the council last year remains unspent.

The Government continue their efforts to help Liverpool in a whole range of different ways. The Merseyside Development Corporation has spent £79 million in Liverpool on the regeneration of derelict docklands. In 1981, the special Merseyside task force was set up to work with local authorities, government agencies, and the private sector. We want to co-operate with the city council in the task of regenerating Liverpool —it is the council which has taken the decision to go it alone.

There is no change in the Government's policy towards Liverpool city council. Of course, we are watching the situation closely, but like the Labour party, like the unions, like the churches and like the authors of the Stonefrost report, we believe that the council can and must take action itself. The city council knows that it is within its competence to put its city on a sound financial footing, to prevent hardship and to maintain jobs and services. I urge the city most strongly to do so.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Seventeen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LOTHIAN REGION (EDINBURGH WESTERN RELIEF ROAD) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Dispute

1. **Mr. Dormond** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' dispute.

2. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current teachers' dispute.

10. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current position in the teachers' dispute.

11. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the present position in the teachers' pay dispute.

14. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the teachers' pay dispute.

17. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the teachers' dispute.

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): A series of offers have been made to the teacher unions. The package of reforms and pay improvements offered in the Burham committee on 12 September had the Government's endorsement and represented a basis for a worthwhile settlement, beneficial to teachers and pupils alike. All offers have been rejected by the unions even as a basis for further negotiations. The reconstituted teachers' panel met on 11 November, but failed to agree a resumption of negotiations.

Meanwhile, the appalling, deliberate disruption of children's education continues. In the light of the offers that have been made and the union's unwillingness to negotiate, there can be no justification for continued industrial action. The Government will continue to work for a lasting settlement that will raise pay levels for good teachers, reform the career structure, improve promotion prospects and clarify teachers' professional duties. Only such a settlement can lead to progress towards our objectives for better schools for pupils of all abilities.

Mr. Dormand: Is it not abundantly clear that the Secretary of State is failing to satisfy this most moderate of professions, although he has reduced the National Union of Teachers representation on the Burnham committee? Is it not a fact that there can be a settlement only if he makes money immediately available to the local authorities? I do not for a moment doubt the sincerity of the Secretary of State, but in view of the unprecedented damage that he is causing to the education service, he should resign immediately.

Sir Keith Joseph: It is not I who brought about the ending of the NUT majority on the Burnham teachers' panel. It was brought about by the individual decision of thousands of teachers who, of their own free will, left membership of the NUT. It is not the Government who have failed to act in the dispute. We have made a substantial, though conditional, offer. It is the teacher unions which have consistently rejected all proposals to negotiate.

Mr. Howarth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the pupils in my constituency of Cannock and Burntwood are being singled out for punitive action by the NUT? Does he agree that, when there is £1,250 million of new money on the table, that is a disgraceful performance, and that the best service that the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers could do would be to come back to the negotiating table without imposing totally unreasonable conditions?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with my hon. Friend. The teachers' unions seem to be putting children absolutely last in their considerations.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments, which I am sure are applauded and agreed with totally by my right hon. and hon. Friends. Given the difficulties that we experienced last year and the year before on teachers' pay negotiations, has my right hon. Friend any proposals for abolishing the Burnham committee and introducing something different so that negotiations will be easier for all concerned? I believe that most teachers would like to return to work and would accept the Government's offer. Unfortunately, many of their unions do not want them to do so.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am ready to take into account any proposal that would enable more sensible negotiations to occur. Unless there is a willingness to negotiate, changes in the negotiating machinery will not make much difference.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend accept that even among moderate teachers there is great concern about the way in which appraisal might work? Will he take this opportunity to say once again that any system of appraisal could be instituted only on the basis that it operated fairly and that teachers realised that? Will he confirm that the idea behind appraisal is to help teachers to improve their own work, and not to punish them for any shortcomings?

Sir Keith Joseph: Precisely. The purpose of appraisal is to further the professional development and career prospects of teachers. It is coupled with the much expanded and more effective in-service training system that we propose. Taxpayers' money has been set aside to run pilot schemes on appraisal but, sadly, these are being blocked by the teachers' unions, which will not agree to carry them forward. I hope very much that they will change their attitude and allow pilot schemes to go ahead.

Mr. Yeo: Did my right hon. Friend notice that the National Union of Teachers chose to carry out its lobby of Parliament a couple of weeks ago in the week after half term, rather than during half term, thereby causing unnecessary and avoidable disruption to its members' schools? Does he agree that that undermines its claim to have serious concern for the children?

Sir Keith Joseph: The teachers' unions seem explicitly to be following a campaign of maximum disruption to children's schooling at minimum cost to teachers' pay.

Mr. Latham: To assist the settlement of a damaging dispute, will my right hon. Friend reconsider the proposals made by his distinguished Conservative predecessor, that a review body should be set up, provided that all disruption ends at once?

Sir Keith Joseph: A review body is meant for occasions when normal negotiations are not easily practicable. Negotiations are possible given good will by the teachers. It is important to bear in mind the employers' capacity to pay. Therefore, negotiations should involve employers as well as employees.

Mr. Flannery: The Secretary of State is responding to five or six questions, but is it not a fact that nearly all of them have been tabled by Conservative Members? There are about 20 questions asking the right hon. Gentleman to make a statement on the dispute, and almost all of them have been tabled by Tory Members. *[Interruption.]* When will Conservative Members realise that shouting at me is not an answer to the teachers' damaging dispute, and when will the Secretary of State realise that new money must be put on the table to give teachers a professional wage? A moderate section of the community is asking only for the right to teach our children with a semblance of dignity, and the right hon. Gentleman is refusing to give them that, although he gave Johnson Matthey about £¼ billion overnight without questioning any of us.

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friends had questions early on the Order Paper on this subject. That is why there is a barrage of questions from them. The hon. Gentleman seems constantly to ignore the fact that the Government have made available a substantial sum of extra money in addition to normal pay increases, conditional upon the teachers accepting professional terms of duty. The teachers' unions have so far refused even to consider or discuss that offer.

Mr. Flannery: That is becasuse it is not enough.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Secretary of State appreciate that he has succeeded in demoralising the entire education world? Does he not understand that teachers are as important to law and order, for example, as the police, and vital to Britain's future. It is essential that teachers be given their proper status.

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree about the importance of teachers. I am repeatedly being told that teachers' morale has collapsed and that I am responsible for that. I am accused of starving education of resources and of continually denigrating teachers. In fact, public spending per child in schools has never been as high as it is now. I do not denigrate teachers. I recognise the difficulties that they face in dealing with a difficult job, and I applaud what they have achieved, but I believe that there is scope for better schools, and that can be achieved only by the teachers themselves.

Mr. Hancock: Does the Secretary of State not realise that the Burnham committee is useless as a negotiating machinery for settling this strike? Is it not about time that he heeded the advice, not only of Opposition Members, but of his colleagues, and set up a pay review board to look properly and effectively at teachers? Does he agree that to many teachers the Burnham machinery is seen as an impediment to a settlement?

Sir Keith Joseph: No. I do not accept that. Given a willingness to negotiate, which the teachers' unions have so far signally failed to show, I do not think that there would be any difficulty in using the present system.

Mr. Madden: If the Secretary of State is waiting for a parent backlash to compel teachers to drop their justified claims and industrial action, does he not realise that he is whistling in the wind? Parents cannot understand why the Government fell over themselves to pay bumper increases to judges, generals and senior civil servants. They gave them what we were told were incentives to deal with low morale. Parents see low morale among teachers, and they see teachers pursuing a justified claim to restore their salaries to what they were 10 years ago, when they were broadly comparable with other professional groups, managers and engineers. That is what this claim is all about, and the Government should respond to it with a sense of urgency and fair play.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am not relying on any such assumption. The Government have recognised the need to offer pay that will recruit, retain and motivate teachers of the right quality—good and effective teachers—in just the same way as the extra money, although on a very much smaller scale in aggregate, was offered in order to recruit, retain and motivate civil servants and the judiciary of the right quality.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Secretary of State recall that a few months ago there was a vote in the House on top salaries? Some would say that the House was over-weighted, like the Burnham committee, in favour of one side. The result was that Cabinet Members and all their cronies on the Back Benches voted to ensure that the Lord Chancellor received an adequate salary increase, according to their criterion. If that can be applied to their own people, and if everyone else on top salaries can get treated to an average 17 per cent. increase, why cannot the teachers be treated similarly? Surely the truth is that Tory government is all about double standards—different pay for different groups of people.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Lord Chancellor does not take the increase that was voted for him. Secondly, the Government are concerned with better standards for children of all ability, and not with double standards.

Mr. Madel: Should not certain of the teaching trade unions change their attitudes towards their professional responsibilities and conditions of service, and instead of targeting certain constituencies for strikes and disruption, should they not be explaining the benefits of the Government's latest package and resuming normal working, while meaningful negotiations get under way?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes. Nothing can justify the behaviour of a profession in disrupting the education of its charges.

Mr. Park: If the Secretary of State is so confident about his conduct of educational affairs, why will he not accept the suggestion of his hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) and allow a review, so that we can establish whether his confidence is well placed, or misplaced?

Sir Keith Joseph: Because the Government believe it right that those who have to find the money—although in this case it is ratepayers' money and taxpayers' money —should be part of the negotiation.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend agree that any settlement of the teachers' dispute must enhance the team work between heads and teachers in schools?

Is my right hon. Friend aware that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), the chairman of the parliamentary Labour education committee, recently told a meeting of teachers at the House, "The heads are your enemies"? Was that not disgraceful? Will that not damage schools deeply, and damage children? Is that not typical of what some Labour politicians have said? Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw it?

Sir Keith Joseph: If it was said, I am sure that it could not have been meant. I should like to repeat the tribute that I paid in the House to the heads and many of their deputies for bearing such a burden to keep schools open for their children, and to those teachers, in all unions — particularly one union—who have refused to disrupt.

Mr. Radice: Is the Secretary of State aware that many hon. Members on each side of the House have found his failure this afternoon to announce a new peace initiative to end the 10 months long teachers' dispute deeply disturbing?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he has still not replied to my letter of 25 October, in which I urged him to set up an independent inquiry into teachers' salaries, with a remit to report as soon as possible, and with a firm commitment to fund its findings? If he is not going to resign, is it not about time that he stopped wringing his hands, started behaving like a Secretary of State, and took constructive action to bring justice for the teachers and end the disruption in our schools?

Sir Keith Joseph: It is not for the Government to produce a new initiative.

Mr. Radice: Why not?

Sir Keith Joseph: It is not the Government who are intransigent. In recent months, one side has been making offers, and the teachers' side has been saying no, no and no again. It is perverse for the hon. Gentleman to blame the Government and urge us to take a new initiative. He knows from his local authority party colleagues, who lead for the employers in the negotiations, that we face people who have not moved an inch from their position of, "Pay us more now and we will talk about reform later."

As for the hon. Gentleman's suggestion of a review on pay only, that is the last thing that the Government would contemplate. We are convinced that it is right that conditions of service and career structure must go with pay.

Parental Choice

3. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for widening parental choice about their children's schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): The Education Act 1980 substantially improved parental rights in the school admission process. There are no present plans to take this further.

Mr. Amess: Is my hon. Friend aware that a number of parents of children in my constituency of Basildon were dissatisfied with the schools appeals procedure this year? Will he encourage local education authorities to examine the procedures to ensure that the spirit of the Education Act, giving real parental choice, is complied with?

Mr. Dunn: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his determination in promoting the interests of his constituents, but it would be perfection indeed if every child could be admitted to the school chosen by his or her parents. That cannot be guaranteed. I understand that nationally over 90 per cent. of parents are successful in securing a place at their prefered school. The latest information available to me suggests that about 40 per cent. of cases taken to appeal are decided in favour of the parents.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister agree that the most important thing is to ensure that all schools are good enough for all children to attend? Will he persuade the Secretary of State to stop fantasising about making direct grants to primary schools and persuade him instead to ensure, first, that adequate resources are made available for the settlement of the teachers' dispute, and secondly, that there is an adequate supply of books in schools so that pupils do not have the problem of being unable to do their homework because books are not available?

Mr. Dunn: The Government will continue to consider and contemplate ways of improving parental choice. However, I have to remind the hon. Gentleman that the Government were the first Government to take steps to enshrine parental rights in legislation. When in office, the hon. Gentleman's party never did any such thing.

Research Funding

4. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he is satisfied with the geographical spread of the research funding provided by his Department.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Peter Brooke): Yes, Sir.

Mr. Sackville: Is my hon. Friend aware that out of nearly 2,500 Medical Research Council jobs in England and Wales that are funded by his Department, only 150 are

located north of Cambridge? Does he not think that this is a matter of concern? The medical profession in the north of England certainly regards it as such.

Mr. Brooke: There are nine such units in Scotland, as well as five in the north of England. In the context of Medical Research Council units, over the years there has been a pattern of almost as many opening as closing. Closure normally takes place on the retirement of the director of the unit. The location of the subsequent unit is determined by the choice of director. It is a fact that many of these are located in the south of England.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that injury is the largest cause of death and disability among the under-40s? Is he further aware that the trauma unit, the only one in the United Kingdom, is in Manchester, and that it is under threat? Is this not disgraceful? Will he please look at it once again?

Mr. Brooke: I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that I shall study the matter again. However, he will know, because of his deep knowledge, that Medical Research Council decisions are based on scientific judgment.

Mr. Dorrell: Does my hon. Friend agree that a university department without a research capacity is unlikely to be able to maintain the standards that we expect of university departments? Although my hon. Friend may therefore feel that it is necessary to contemplate the closure of individual university departments on economic grounds, will he not contemplate removing research capacity from departments and introducing teaching only departments into our universities?

Mr. Brooke: I take the spirit of my hon. Friend's question. About one half of the £1 billion that is spent on research through my Department's funding is spent across the nation by the University Grants Committee, through the university system. Approximately two thirds of research council money is similarly spent on higher education. There is, therefore, a wide geographical spread.

Dr. Bray: Is the Minister aware that he cannot possibly be satisfied with the regional distribution of research, when the national total is so miserable? Is he further aware that after allowing for the increase of £15 million in the science budget this year over the total planned last year for this year, nevertheless, in real terms, the Advisory Board for the Research Council estimates that the volume of research activity will fall by 8 per cent. in the current decade?

Mr. Brooke: I am conscious of the difference between the growth in the science vote, measured by gross domestic product deflator terms, which has grown by 8 per cent. since 1979, and the amount of science that it will buy, but the £45 million which my right hon. Friend has been able to secure in the most recent public expenditure announcement goes a long way towards restoring level funding for the balance of this decade.

Open University

5. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the funding of the Open University.

Mr. Brooke: Since the letter announcing the university's grant for 1985 and indicated grants for 1986 and 1987 was issued in February, we have received 90 letters. A petition, with some 160,000 signatures, has been handed in to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister by the Open University students' association.

Mr. Thomas: Does the Minister agree that these representations indicate support for the work of the university? How does a reduction in the funding of the Open University square with his Government's alleged commitment to adult and continuing education? Is not the university extremely cost-effective in terms of its distance learning techniques?

Mr. Brooke: The petition to which I have referred shows that there is keen support for the Open University. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State asked the Open University visiting committee to make further funding recommendations. Its report will be issued shortly and my right hon. Friend will then announce his decisions. Some of the calculations on cost-effectiveness take student support into account. The cost-effectiveness of the institution per se compares very well with, that of other higher education institutions.

Mr. Conway: Is my hon. Friend aware of the contribution made by the Open University to those areas, such as Shrewsbury in Shropshire in my constituency, that do not have a university within easy travelling distance and, therefore, must make the maximum use of Open University services? Is my hon. Friend further aware that curtailing those services hits not only those rural areas but the disabled community and would not be welcomed by either side of the House?

Mr. Brooke: I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the manner in which the Open University has contributed to the spread of access throughout the country.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that this year there were seven applicants for every two places in Scotland and, no doubt, similar figures for the rest of Britain? Is he also aware that an efficiency study has shown that the Open University has been run efficiently? As the Secretary of State appears to think that the main aim of education is to produce more science and technology graduates, does the hon. Gentleman accept that more generous funding would enable the Open University to produce more such graduates?

Mr. Brooke: An efficiency study was carried out. It identified a number of areas in which savings could be made. The Open University has been pursuing them——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: They were small savings.

Mr. Brooke: They were between £2 million and £3·5 million. I congratulate the Open University on the movement in student ratios which means that 50 per cent. of students study science, engineering and technology courses. In the decisions that were announced earlier this year, the Government put forward a further £360,000 to sustain that movement.

Mr. Pawsey: How much funding for the Open University comes from private sources, especially industry?

Mr. Brooke: Of that part of the university's income which is grant and student income, 85 per cent. comes from the state. That is the percentage if one omits summer school fees. The figure is 81 per cent. if summer school

fees are included. The Open University is to be warmly congratulated on the manner in which it has developed continuing education courses with industry.

Mr. Sheerman: Will the hon. Gentleman grasp the fact that, given the parlous state of the British economy, more highly trained people are needed? Because the Open University is a capital-intensive institution, it could take on 20,000 more students now and train them for the country, if it were not for the Government's parsimonious attitude. Will the hon. Gentleman heed Lord Briggs' statement just last week that; because of the expansion of the 30 to 60 age group, we need a second Open University? That is the size of the challenge. When will the Government wake up to what the Open University could do for our country?

Mr. Brooke: One would not think from that question that, in the five years between 1974 and 1979, when the hon. Gentleman's party was in power, there were 97,000 disappointed applicants, whereas in the past seven years of this Government there have been only 87,000 disappointed applicants.

6. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications were received by the Open University for undergraduate places for the forthcoming academic year; and how many of these were unable to find a place; and how these figures compare with previous years.

Mr. Brooke: The Open University has received 56,000 applications for its undergraduate programme for 1986. It has not been able to offer places to 23,900 of those applicants. That is the highest number since 1976, when 28,800 could not be offered a place.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Minister accept that this has been a record year for applications? In response to the visiting committee's report, how does he expect to measure up to the legitimate expectations and hopes of many applicants, especially those in rural areas where there are no other immediate means of further education and training? Can he repeat the assurance given by his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 25 June this year, when he said that no student has to wait more than one year to be admitted?

Mr. Brooke: Yes. In answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am delighted to say that, despite the scare noises that have been made about the fees currently being exerted by the Open University, applications continue to rise in the way that the hon. Gentleman described.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister means extorted.

Mr. Brooke: On the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, of course I recognise the need that exists in parts of the country, but the Open University will maintain its level of students in 1986 at its current level.

Mr. Cormack: How many of the applications were from people who wished to study the arts and the humanities? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to contradict the impression that is now abroad that the Government are somehow biased against those who wish to study the arts? Would that not be a strange and perverse attitude for a Tory Government to take?

Mr. Brooke: I am delighted to agree with my hon. Friend. The Government retain their support for the arts, which has always pervaded our party. Half of the present student intake is doing science, engineering and technology, and that figure has increased.

Mr. Canavan: Is the Minister aware that in Scotland, for example, there were over 7,000 applicants this year for only 2,000 places at the Open University? In view of the indisputable fact that the Tory Government's cuts are excluding thousands of potential students from their only chance of improving their education, is the Minister not ashamed of the fact that he is slamming shut the door of what was once called the Open University—one of the Labour Government's finest achievements'.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member may deploy his rhetoric for as long as he likes, but, as I said earlier, in a shorter period of time his Government disappointed more applicants than our Government have over a longer period.

Religious Teaching

7. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received from the Moslem community about the teaching of religion in schools.

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mr. Chris Patten): My right hon. Friend has received no representations of this sort in the recent past.

Mr. Thurnham: Following the Swann committee's recommendations, what is my hon. Friend doing to help teachers who need additional training in that respect?

Mr. Patten: The Government have decided to extend the in-service training grant scheme to include training and are responding to ethnic diversity. We have taken some measures with regard to initial training, and we are anxious to increase the supply of ethnic minority teachers. We are therefore considering the comments received on the consultation document on that subject which we issued last July.

Mr. Pavitt: Does the Minister read the *Daily Jang* which is the most widely read Urdu newspaper? Has he read the article about the need for more language laboratories for teachers who are trying to teach Urdu in schools?

Mr. Patten: I am bound to say that I have not read that publication as frequently as I should. I shall, of course, now do so and take on board what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Open University

The following question stood upon the Order Paper.

8. **Mr. Donald Stewart** to ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for further assistance to the Open University.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. Donald Stewart to ask question No. 8.

Mr. Stewart: Already answered, Sir.

University Teachers

9. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many university mathematics and science lecturers have been appointed over the last year and are expected to be appointed over the next year.

Mr. Brooke: Statistics on university academic appointments generally in 1984-85 are not yet available. However, about 260 new posts in mathematics, science and engineering were created last year under the "new blood" and information technology initiatives. Further new posts in those disciplines will be established over the coming year as a result of those initiatives and of the engineering and technology programme announced in March.

Mr. Alton: How does the Minister respond to the National Audit Office report, which states that his higher education policies have led to unnecessary chaos and disruption? Is it not ironic that he is now having to recruit new posts, especially in the sciences, when his policy only four years ago led to massive cuts in the same higher education posts?

Mr. Brooke: The report of the National Audit Office is the subject of question No. 12. The reductions effected between 1981 and 1984 were in response to public expenditure restraints. It is widely acknowledged that there have also been benefits flowing from the new blood over and above the replenishment to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the Minister not firmly agree that the whole future economic prosperity of this country depends on a highly trained and educated labour force, particularly in science and technology? Why are the Government insisting that all university science and mathematics departments should at least consider the implications of a 2 per cent. cut for each of the next five years? It is appalling that people should be taken away from their teaching and research roles to spend a considerable amount of time planning for cuts which clearly will be economically distastrous for the country.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Member knows perfectly well that if the UGC had not included science, engineering and technology in its planning exercise, he would have been the first to be on his feet to say that the cuts in the arts and humanities were too severe.

University Funding

12. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking in the light of the National Audit Office report on university funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The National Audit Office report itself identifies some action that has already been taken. My right hon. Friend will consider whether any further action is necessary in the light of any report the Committee of Public Accounts may make to the House.

Mr. Fatchett: Is the Minister satisfied with his complacent response? The National Audit Office report shows that this Government's record on university education has led to a reduction in staffing ratios and has affected the balance of staff within departments and between departments. The reality of this Government's record is that it has damaged the fabric of higher education. We need action, not words, from the Minister.

Mr. Brooke: It is perfectly true that there has been a reduction in funding for higher education, particularly in the universities, from 1981 onwards, but the staff-student ratio that has emerged is still consistent with maintaining quality within the system.

Mr. Beith: How will the gaps be filled at the senior levels with the highly qualified and able teachers and researchers that are identified in this report when there is a drift away from such posts by university teachers, who are demoralised by the present pay levels?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman will find that there is greater concern within the university system about the age profile lower down the system rather than at the top.

Mr. Radice: Is not the message of the Comptroller and Auditor General's report that cuts have a malign and perverse effect that is highly damaging to our nation's future? Why does the autumn statement outline further cuts for higher education over the next three years?

Mr. Brooke: It is a consistent part of public expenditure policy on higher education that efficiency savings of approximately 1 per cent. per annum will continue to be looked for.

Schools (Repairs and Maintenance)

13. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for expenditure on arrears in maintenance and repairs to Britain's schools.

Mr. Dunn: If local education authorities take advantage of the scope for efficiency savings and contain costs generally, the Government's plans for expenditure in 1986-87 provide the opportunity to redeploy resources in support of local priorities, and these might include the repair and maintenance of school buildings.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has the Minister seen the report from the Confederation of Parent-Teachers' Associations? It points to the fact that 52 per cent. of primary schools and 72 per cent. of secondary schools have dilapidated fabric? It speaks of leaking roofs, draughty windows, rotten window frames, decaying plaster, dilapidated wiring — a general decline in standards. Does the Minister intend to do anything about that? Does he realise that Conservative voters do not believe that the Government can save money on the back of education? Why does not the Minister respond to what they want?

Mr. Dunn: We take seriously the concern expressed in the report to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I must make it quite clear that the problem that we face is the accumulated result of inadequate expenditure on the repair and maintenance of building stock over many years, and under successive Governments.

Dame Jill Knight: Has my hon. Friend any comment to make on those Labour authorities which are well aware of the shortcomings in school buildings but refuse to spend money in areas that return Conservative councillors?

Mr. Dunn: I condemn such action by any local authority controlled by the Labour party. However, I am not at all surprised that such policies are being practised.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1 **Mr. Colvin** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be giving a reception for Fellows of the Royal Society.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to welcome the enormous measure of all-party support that she received in the House yesterday following her statement on the Anglo-Irish agreement? Will my right hon. Friend reflect with sadness on the extremist reaction of certain hon. Members from the Province? Does she not agree that surely the time to judge the agreement is in two or three years, when it has had a chance to work? Do not those who prejudge the agreement misjudge the very real yearning of the vast majority of people in the United Kingdom, which includes Northern Ireland, for a new and constructive approach towards achieving peace and stability in the Province?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I very much welcome the reception given to the agreement. I believe that most people wish to give it a really good chance to work, and that most people will take a constructive approach and condemn those who use violence to defeat democracy.

Mr. Steel: Is the Prime Minister aware that 72 per cent. of the electorate, including 62 per cent. of Conservative voters, now believe that a freeze on the testing and deployment of nuclear weapons is the way ahead at Geneva? Has the right hon. Lady told President Reagan that the Government are prepared to have the Polaris system counted in in the discussions and to freeze the purchase of the Trident if that would help the peace process?

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that either the independent French or independent British nuclear deterrent should be counted in in the discussions, for obvious reasons. If there are negotiations between the two super powers on the broad basis of equality, balance and verification, to count in the British and French would mean that we would determine exactly what the United States says, and the right hon. Gentleman must see that that would be utterly impossible.

Mr. Terlezki: In view of the meeting taking place in Geneva between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev, does my right hon. Friend agree that, while it is imperative that there is a positive result from the conference, it must be remembered that unless the human rights issue is included—rights which, regrettably, do not exist in the Soviet Union—and unless Mr. Gorbachev adheres to the Helsinki final act, nothing positive will result from the conference?

The Prime Minister: It is, of course, imperative that we continue to have a sure defence. I believe that the human rights issue is on the agenda at Geneva. It would be wise to wait to see what comes out of Geneva, rather than attempt to prophesy.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Prime Minister confirm that as the Government expect to receive £4·75 billion next year from the sale of British Gas and other public assets, the tax cuts that she proposes for March will be wholly financed by those sales?

The Prime Minister: No. The right hon. Gentleman should wait for the Budget before talking about tax cuts. We will not be in a position to determine what will happen in the Budget until we have the latest economic forecast, which usually comes in February. That will depend upon many things, and it is thoroughly mischievous to try to say in advance what will happen.

Mr. Hattersley: I take it that the Prime Minister does not deny the Chancellor's estimate that £4·75 billion is to be obtained through asset sales. If that is the case, what other means of financing the tax cuts is possible? Is not the Prime Minister trying to set up a smokescreen to obscure the truth that, having increased taxes year after year when she promised to cut them, she now proposes to sell off national assets to buy a few squalid votes?

The Prime Minister: The privatisation programme stands in its own right, because we believe in putting more companies into the hands of the people, with the possibility of enhanced share purchase. Even if the proceeds of privatisation are added to the public sector borrowing requirement, that figure as a proportion of GDP is expected to be the lowest since 1971-72. Will the right hon. Gentleman contrast that with the record of the Labour Government in 1975-76, on which the equivalent PSBR now would be £33 billion?

Mr. Hattersley: The right hon. Lady flagrantly and pathetically avoids answering my question, so I shall repeat it. If she proposes to raise £4·75 billion next year from the sale of public assets, what possible alternative financing is there for the tax cuts that she proposes?

The Prime Minister: Public expenditure is projected to remain broadly stable in real terms over the survey period, whether those asset sales are included or excluded. I do not propose to make any statement about taxation cuts. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor particularly did not make any statement about fiscal adjustments. The right hon. Gentleman is intentionally being thoroughly mischievous.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the tragedies of Ireland is that those who should take the lead in ending the maiming and killing of people in our land are the very people who talk of treachery, where only courage and vision have been shown at this time? Is it not important that those fanatics, whether they be IRA or Protestant, should seek a way in which all peoples can live at peace and be united in this land?

The Prime Minister: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that men and women of good will in Northern Ireland, in the whole of the United Kingdom and in the Republic should join in defeating the IRA.

Mr. James Callaghan: Reverting to the question asked by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), as the Prime Minister says that the equivalent of the just over £10 billion

PSBR in 1977 would now be £33 billion, does that not illustrate how seriously our currency has been devalued under her management?

The Prime Minister: No one in the House could exceed the right hon. Gentleman's own record on devaluation.

Mr. Porter: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the report in *The Guardian* today that she may be having second thoughts about the Anglo-Irish agreement? Is she aware that a large number of reasonable, non-extremist English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish unionists would welcome a reconsideration?

The Prime Minister: I think the general view is that the agreement should be given a chance, that it is contructive, and that it is welcomed because it should get everyone who believes that violence should not be a part of democratic life to join in defeating violence.

Q2. **Mr. Martin** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martin: What does the Prime Minister intend to do about the decline in traditional industries such as engineering? It is deplorable in a community like mine, which has one of the main railway engineering workshops in the United Kingdom. BREL is closing that workshop. When will the Prime Minister reverse the decline and do something about unemployment?

The Prime Minister: Because of reduced maintenance requirements of modern rail rolling stock the work force of British Rail Engineering at Springburn is to be reduced from 1,680 to 460. We cannot alter that. The new rolling stock requires less maintenance. I understand that the Scottish Development Agency has undertaken a study to make recommendations on how to generate employment and has made suggestions about how best to go about it.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: Has my right hon. Friend had drawn to her attention the article by the political editor of the *Mail on Sunday* to the effect that the Government have abandoned their plans for rate reform in England and Wales? In view of her very firm commitment during her speech on the Loyal Address, can she confirm that that remains Government policy?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I hope that a Green Paper will be published early in the new year.

Q3. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. McDonald: Will the Prime Minister now agree with even her own supporter, the CBI, which has called for at least £1 million more to be put next year into spending on contruction and training to create jobs? Will she agree to that, instead of sucking up to the electorate with more promises of tax cuts?

The Prime Minister: The CBI stresses in its proposals that any increase in spending on certain areas must be contained within the same overall total. It also says that employers are more inclined to believe that the level of unemployment results from excessive pay increases, overmanning, poor productivity and management failures rather than from Government policies.

Q4. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Currie: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the hefty sentences handed out by courts yesterday and last week to bunches of brutal thugs and rapists? Will she join me in congratulating the judges who have indicated that we will not tolerate violence of that kind, be it against male of female, be it done by black or white? Is not that a message that we must hand out loud and clear?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that some of the crimes that we have seen recently warrant very serious sentences indeed. The sentences are justified on the basis of punishment for the offender, as a deterrent to others and to protect the law-abiding citizen.

Q5. **Mr. Janner** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Janner: Reassuring as it is to the House that the right hon. Lady knows that human rights are on the agenda in Geneva, may I ask whether she will undertake to use every possible opportunity to emphasise to the Soviet authorities that mutual trust between nations requires that they should comply with human rights within their own countries, and in particular that a modest gesture, such as the release of those comparatively few Jewish people who have been waiting for many years to join their families outside, would do a power of good and create much goodwill for the Soviet Union?

The Prime Minister: The answer is, yes, to both parts of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question. As he knows, we frequently raise the matter both in general and in particular cases. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary did so when he last met Mr. Shevardnadze. The matter will again be raised in Geneva. I respectfully suggest that we would all be very pleased if rather more than a moderate gesture were forthcoming.

Q6. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Proctor: Does my right hon. Friend recognise that there are some on the Tory Benches who believe that the Anglo-Irish agreement will tend to increase rather than diminish the level of violence? Does she further recognise that that view is widely shared by Ulster Unionist Catholics as well as by people throughout the Province? Concerning the detail of the agreement, may we have an assurance that the representations by the Government of the Republic at the Anglo-Irish conference will be made public on all occasions?

The Prime Minister: The answer to the first part of my hon. Friend's supplementary question is that I hope he will join in thoroughly condemning all who resort to violence,

and will make that perfectly clear. The answer to the second point, about representations at the intergovernmental conference, is that they would not normally be published.

Mr. McCusker: Does the Prime Minister consider that distinguished Member of the Dublin Parliament, Senator Mary Robinson, to be an illiterate extremist who has thrown away the advances made in this document by her resignation, announced this morning, from membership of the Irish Labour party

"on the basis that it was negotiated without the involvement in any way of the majority community in the North and was unacceptable to all sections of Unionist opinion, and not just to extremists."

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that the agreement is unacceptable to all shades of Unionist opinion. Part of its purpose is to give them greater security and greater assurance about their future.

BILL PRESENTED

CROWN AGENTS (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Timothy Raison, supported by Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe, Mr. Secretary Brittan and the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented under Standing Order No. 111 (Procedure upon Bills whose main object is to create a charge upon the public revenue) a Bill to amend section 17 of the Crown Agents Act 1979; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 11.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the three motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Modification) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the draft Cosmetic Products (Safety) (Amendment) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Questions to Ministers

3.32 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will know of my concern about rail services from Bradford and therefore you will understand my disappointment that my question to the Secretary of State for Transport listed for 2 December came out of the ballot at No. 38.

You will understand how my disappointment turned to dismay, Mr. Speaker, when I found that the Conservative Member for York (Mr. Gregory) in the same selection of questions had questions Nos. 1 and 30. You will understand how my dismay turned to bewilderment when I found that the Conservative Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) in the same selection for questions had questions Nos. 44 and 55.

It is not for me to speculate about the way in which those who busy themselves planting questions may have been working overtime on this occasion, or to seek your advice, Mr. Speaker, about whether in future we should all put in two questions in the hope of settling for the best of two. However, I seriously suggest on this occasion that it would be best if the selection for questions could be conducted again because there is clear evidence that some hon. Members may have taken advantage by submitting more than one question for this question period.

Mr. Speaker: I must make it plain to the House that only one question may be put to the same Minister, and evidently there has been a mistake. If it is of any assistance to the hon. Member, I propose to attend the shuffle this afternoon to see these matters for myself.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has made the important point that two questions were placed in the ballot by one hon. Member. Does that negate the ballot and should a further ballot now take place?

Mr. Speaker: I shall look into that matter.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is this not a case of the pot calling the kettle black? A Labour Member is balloted to come out later this week or next with Question No. 1 to the Prime Minister, and Question No. 40 or thereabouts, and the Table Office has decided that question No. 1 should stand.

Mr. Speaker: I intend to attend the shuffle this afternoon and I shall look into these matters.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If hon. Members wish to table a question, should they not go into the Table Office and do so themselves?

Mr. Speaker: When I first came to the House, I believe that that was always the rule.

Orders of the Day

Okehampton Bypass (Confirmation of Orders) Bill

Considered.

3.36 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I bring this Bill before the House because I genuinely believe that it is the right thing to do in the interests of the environment, the people of Okehampton, and the economy of south-west England.

I think that everyone agrees that a bypass of Okehampton is urgently needed. I need only pray in aid *The Times* of last Wednesday, which said:

> "The true blight is the endless growling flow of heavy lorries. They wind through at a rate of 1,300 per day, darkening the front rooms, playing havoc with the old coping stones on the Baptist Chapel and threatening at any minute to barge, uninvited, into a hotel bar. It is a miracle that there have been so few accidents.
>
> No wonder everyone, from local trades people to Cornish Members of Parliament, is champing at the bit for a bypass."

The people of Okehampton have suffered too long from the thunder of heavy traffic and damage to their environment. The economies of west Devon and Cornwall desperately need better communications with the rest of the country. It is necessary now to make a decision. For 17 years we have been arguing about which side of Okehampton the bypass should go. It is becoming a British weakness that we can never make up our minds. I think that most people would agree that the matter should be settled, and none more so than my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) who so strongly supports the Bill but who, sadly, will not be here today to advocate it because of his illness. I know that he would like us to remember his great interest in the Bill.

The contention is whether the bypass should go to the north or the south of the town. The Bill is straightforward. It seeks to confirm the compulsory purchase orders for a bypass route to the south of Okehampton. It is introduced under section 6(3) of the Statutory Orders (Special Procedures) Act 1945. That Act provides that, in these circumstances, the Bill requires only a Report and Third Reading in both Houses. Its two schedules are the compulsory purchase orders that require confirmation.

I wish to concentrate my remarks on the environmental aspects of the scheme. I shall leave other hon. Members to cover other policy aspects to which I had to have regard when deciding about this road. They are the desperate and urgent need for west Devon and Cornwall to be linked properly to the national road network which is fundamental to regional development and is an integral part of our national policy for roads, the need for economy in road building and the need to conserve agricultural land.

I emphasise that we are promoting the southern route because we believe on balance it is environmentally superior. It is my firm conviction that, in an area as unique as the countryside round Okehampton, environmental factors must not only have high priority but must be the priority. Despite the 17 years of waiting that Okehampton residents have already suffered, if I had believed that the balance of environmental interest favoured any of the

northern alternatives, I would not be here today presenting the Bill. But I do not so believe. I take the responsibility myself. This is not a decision taken by my Department; it is a decision taken by Ministers. I have looked carefully at all the alternative routes with an open mind. I am convinced personally that the southern route is the best option for the environment. I know that these matters are subjective, but I am in good company. My predecessors in this office were so convinced, including those in the last Labour Administration who first made the decision. I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House have visited the area and I expect that many of them are equally convinced.

The independent landscape advisory committee visited the area on no fewer than six separate occasions. On each occasion it said that a southern route was best. The public were consulted in 1975 on a route to the south and two to the north. The majority preferred a southern route. So did the independent inspector. His report concluded, on balance, that environmental considerations favoured the southern route along with other relevant factors, and that the damage incurred in going north of Okehampton on any of the 13 possible variants of a northern route would be greater. The county councils of Devon and Cornwall, and all the affected local authorities in the area, are similarly convinced.

Why are so many people persuaded of the environmental case? Of course, the idea of driving a major road through Dartmoor national park is, at face value, highly undesirable. People imagine a noisy, ugly scar cutting across the moor. But the southern route does not go on the moor proper; it goes along the lower slopes of the northern escarpment, very near its boundary. The northern boundary of Dartmoor follows the lines of the railway and the old parish boundaries. Despite its incursion into the edge of the national park, a southern route would be better absorbed into the landscape and concealed than any northern route could be because it follows the natural contours. It would not affect the moor proper and people who want to get on to the moor would not have their access to it restricted. We know that the railway line, which our route parallels, is virtually invisible from any distance.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The Secretary of State talks about the "moor proper." Does he not agree that over the years, with the protection of national parks, there has been a constant problem of edging? In many senses, it is the edge of the moor that is almost the most precious part of it, and the House of Commons is charged with responsibility for looking after and safeguarding the national park as a whole, not concentrating on the moorland or the central part.

Mr. Ridley: I am coming to national parks policy. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who will reply to the debate, will dwell on it, too. The right hon. Gentleman seems to be unaware that the eastern part of the road takes a section of road out of the national park. Not much credit has been given to us for that.

We are of course planning to do all we can to ensure that the route causes minimum noise, or visual intrusion, for the residents of Okehampton or visitors to Dartmoor. We plan to plant more than 70,000 trees, partly to replace the 1,000 or so that would be lost, but mainly to shield the road. We shall do all possible to get good tree cover as quickly as possible. We plan to build earth embankments to screen parts of the road from the town and its immediate surroundings and provide noise baffles on the viaduct at Fatherford. I am also looking at the possibility of additional tree cover in four areas in Meldon woods, two parts of East Hill and Fatherford, which will further screen the road, especially from higher up the slope. I am sure that we shall obtain the co-operation of the local owners. In short, there would be little evidence of the road from any distance once the tree cover is in place. I should like to make it clear to the House that we are open to any suggestions for further measures to improve the environment of the road within reasonable cost limits. That has always been my position.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): My right hon. Friend has said that the road may be hidden by 70,000 trees —Heaven knows where he will put them all. Does he agree that the uniqueness of this part of Dartmoor is the swinging arc of a valley with a deep river at the bottom, and that the noise from the dual carriageway will have an adverse effect on Dartmoor in the valley and on the high moor to the south? Is it not noise that is the real factor?

Mr. Ridley: If noise is the problem, the noise of the present A30 is appalling. That road is close to the middle of Okehampton and close to the castle as well. The scheme will take the traffic that now uses the A30 much further away. I thought that my hon. Friend would be rooting to get it built as quickly as possible.

Contrast the possible routes to the north of Okehampton. We cannot achieve this degree of concealment in that area. The countryside is different. Any road there would involve conspicuous and ugly 20 ft high embankments. Attempts to conceal these by tree planting would simply accentuate the inevitable scar. The road would be seen from Dartmoor, while the southern road would not. Any northern route involves a 90 ft high viaduct across the Okement river at Knowle—on the very doorstep of the town—twice as high as the viaduct on the southern route and very much more generally visible. That really would be an environmental disaster, especially for the national park.

I therefore conclude that the southern route is the best. But I must deal with the implications for national parks and open space. I concentrated on purely environmental issues first because in the heated debate which has been going on, inside and outside Parliament, the interests of the environment have been presented as being synonymous with maintaining the integrity of the boundaries of the Dartmoor national park. Those who favour the southern route have been dubbed as anti-environment, QED. This is simply not true.

As the House knows, the compulsory purchase orders for the southern route were referred to a joint Select Committee, not because the route clipped the edge of the national park, but because the southern bypass would have taken a small amount of land, which was claimed to be public open space land and the exchange land proposals were found by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to be not good enough. There was also an area of land which was claimed to be open space and which the inspector recommended should be treated as such but for which exchange land could not effectively be offered prior to the inspector's view on the point.

[Mr. Ridley]

Opponents of the southern route argued before the Joint Committee—as they had argued at the public inquiry in the 58 days devoted to these issues—that a southern route should not be approved because it makes an incursion, albeit a slight one, into Dartmoor national park. They pointed to the alleged inconsistency between the route and the Government's policy to avoid such incursions unless there is a compelling need which

"could not be met by any reasonable alternative means"—

a quote from the Department of the Environment's policy circular 4/76, which was issued by the previous Labour Government. The objectors failed to convince the inspector but they did convince four out of six members of the Joint Committee.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): My right hon. Friend has referred to the Joint Select Committee, which I had the dubious privilege to chair. He has spoken of the four to two majority as if that was in some way a denigration of the majority vote. Presumably he would not apply the same criteria to majority votes in the House or in general elections, which are rarely unanimous. Surely he should accept that a majority of four to two, or any other majority, is a mandate.

Mr. Ridley: I do not accept that I used the words "four to two" in any derogatory sense. I can assure my hon. Friend that I entirely respect the majority. If, at the end of the process, the Bill receives the support of the majority of both Houses of Parliament, I am sure that he, equally, will respect that majority. It is this place and another place which jointly have the responsibility to come to a final verdict on the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On which previous occasion have a Government sought to overrule a majority finding of a Select Committee which was set up under the procedure that has been described? Is there a precedent for the Government's reaction to a Committee of both Houses? What does the right hon. Gentleman cite as his authority for doing what he seeks to do?

Mr. Ridley: I am coming to the constitutional point and I shall give the precedent. The hon. Gentleman could have saved the House's time by asking the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), who I am sure would have put him right, as would many others.

The DOE circular 4/76 on national parks was a statement of the policy of the then Labour Government. It is also this Government's policy. Its publication in 1976 preceded the Government's announcement of their preferred route for the Okehampton bypass through the edge of the Dartmoor national park, by eight months. The then Labour Government clearly saw no discrepancy between their national parks policy and their preferred route for the Okehampton bypass. The circular provided for exceptions and Okehampton is just such an exception where, and I quote again,

"there is a compelling need which could not be met by any reasonable alternative means".

I know that there is a fear that even if the southern route is better environmentally, it may create some sort of precedent because it infringes the outskirts of a national park. People think, that if it goes ahead, a future Government may have no qualms about driving roads through national parks. I assure the House that it does not create such a precedent. We stand by the national parks policy of DOE circular 4/76. There are examples of major roads where we have deliberately sought to avoid national park boundaries, even where it would have been cheaper and more convenient to cross a national park. Indeed, to the east of Okehampton, the new route for the third stage of the Exeter to Okehampton A30 route was deliberately re-designed to take the road out of the national park altogether. Okehampton by pass, however, is an exception—an exception allowed for in the policy—which the Labour Government provided for.

I must also mention open space. It was, after all, open space and not national parks issues which prompted the setting up of the Joint Committee. We are always concerned to find land as replacement open space to exchange for the land we are taking. We have, of course, already offered four acres in Meldon woods for the two required for the road to cross it. Furthermore, I am now more than hopeful that we could acquire two significant pieces of land for public use—both of which are within easier reach of Okehampton and Dartmoor users than Meldon woods and total almost 30 acres. One plot is near the castle, the other on the lower slopes of East hill. All this would mean a total of well over 30 acres compared with approximately 22 acres of land now used by the public and needed for the road. This is, of course, in addition to the extra land we might get agreement on for landscaping purposes, which totals another eight acres or more. If Parliament approves this Bill, my Department will negotiate with the owners, who are, I understand, willing in principle to sell.

So it is on environmental grounds that I recommend this Bill to the House. I hope that what I have said so far will reassure hon. Members that this is the right solution and that we are doing all we can to accommodate people's concerns.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the swap of open spaces. Does he agree that part of the attraction of open space is that it is relatively quiet for people to go out in? Is there not a danger of much of the land that he is offering in exchange suffering considerably from noise pollution because of the motorway?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman clearly has not been there. If he tried to penetrate Meldon woods, as I have, he would find no conceivable way of getting more than two yards into it. It is a thicket. It may be quiet, but there is no point having a quiet place into which one cannot get. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) agrees that the exchange land that we are offering is infinitely more desirable than much of the land that has been taken.

Mr. Steen: I am sure that the House will be interested in the swap of open space because, as my right hon. Friend knows, the offer has been made only in the past couple of weeks. The Department took it upon itself to consider the matter only in July after my right hon. Friend's statement, when I raised it with him. The 10 national environmental and conservation bodies involved spent more than £50,000 petitioning the Joint Committee about open space. My right hon. Friend has subsequently found open space—whether it is comparable is another matter. Does he agree

that those national environmental and conservation organisations should be repaid the £50,000 that they have spent on representing to the Joint Select Committee a point that they need not have made had the open space been offered before the Joint Select Committee was convened?

Mr. Ridley: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend is now castigating me for having found, admittedly at a late stage, the open space land that he seeks. That cannot be a cause of criticism, because had such land not been found he would presumably have been disappointed. I do not think that I can accept the principle that those who fight cases before the courts, at public inquiries or before parliamentary Committees should be recompensed whether they win or lose. I am sure he would agree that such a principle could lead to the disbursement of public money on causes, some of which he might not be very keen on.

I should like to mention two other secondary but important issues. Opponents of a southern route claim that a route to the north of Okehampton could be built very quickly and would take only five years as opposed to the three years needed to complete the route to the south. That is wrong. It would take at least nine years before we could get any northern route built. That estimate is the best we could achieve. It assumes that work on other national roads in the west country would be delayed while further effort is diverted to Okehampton.

On average, it takes 13 years to plan and build a new road. The so-called expert opinion, which believes that a northern route could be built in five years makes a number of assumptions about the way in which a northern route could be progressed that are simply not real. I regret as much as anyone the time it takes to implement roads schemes, but I find it inconsistent that some of the very people who most prize their rights to object and delay at public inquiries should suddenly believe that we should deny these rights to others, for that is effectively what a shorter time scale would involve.

It is as if the objectors to the southern route mattered while their opponents did not. Any material reduction in the time needed for this statutory process would mean that those against a northern route would have to lose their rights to be consulted and to object—rights which the objectors to the southern route have exercised to the full. Any northern route would be bitterly contested. No public inquiry could be reduced to the mere formality that seems to be implied by their timetable.

We would also have to cut corners in the design process. There is no ready prepared northern route waiting to be brought off the shelf and dusted off for public consideration. Furthermore, if the inspector did not accept the Department's proposal, and rejected any northern route on environmental grounds and recommended a southern route instead, we are back again to square one and more endless delays.

The second issue is the question of the constitutional propriety of a Government asking Parliament to override in a confirming Bill the report and recommendations of a Joint Committee that the compulsory purchase orders should not be approved. Some in this House and in another place have suggested that any challenge to the Joint Committee would be without constitutional precedent and wrong. I have to say again that the facts do not bear this out. No Committee of Parliament makes decisions; it makes recommendations to Parliament as a whole.

The Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945 provided that, if a Joint Committee turned down compulsory purchase orders in this way, either the orders would fall or the Government would bring forward a confirming Bill. Indeed, that possibility is expressly provided for by the confirming Bill procedure laid down in the Act. There is a precedent for the confirming Bill procedure. It was used in 1949 to reverse two amendments reported by a Joint Committee which were regarded as issues of principle in the Mid-Northamptonshire Water Board Order. It was certainly the intention of the Government which introduced the legislation in 1945 that, where matters of policy or principle were concerned, they reserved the right to have the matter decided by Parliament as a whole.

The then Lord Privy Seal, Arthur Greenwood, said during the passage of the Bill:

> "We hope to get on to the Floor of the House discussions which go to the root of Ministerial Orders . . . instead of allowing them to be conducted in Committee upstairs".—[*Official Report*, 14 November 1945; Vol. 415, c. 2181.]

This is such a case and the only way of achieving discussion on the Floor of the House, following consideration by a Joint Committee, is through introducing a confirming Bill. We are following exactly the procedure provided for in that Act.

The measure is desirable on environmental grounds, vital for the economy of the south-west of England, and essential for the quality of life of the residents of Okehampton and, dare I say it, their sanity. I hope that the House will give it a Third Reading.

4.1 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): There will, of course, be many contentious issues argued in the debate, but perhaps I should begin with one or two points on which there is common ground.

I join the Secretary of State in wishing the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) a speedy recovery to complete health. May I suggest to him, as I am sure that he will read today's *Hansard* very closely, that he might like to read Tom Sharpe's comic novel "Blott on the Landscape", which deals in a hilarious way with a situation not dissimilar to that which we are discussing today.

I think that there is common ground that Okehampton needs a bypass and that such a provision is long overdue for the residents of Okehampton, for the heavy goods vehicle and commercial vehicle drivers, for the tourist trade, and to develop the industry and commerce of the south-west of England. I suspect that on the matter of the Okehampton bypass and also on new roads generally there is a degree of common ground and common concern at the time that such matters take to reach a conclusion.

When I was in local government, before I came to this House, I was frequently impatient and often irritated by the seemingly interminable delays which took place and the endless objections to projects which I thought worth while and urgent. However, I was counselled by more experienced colleagues not to let impatience cloud my judgment and that irritation should not be allowed to override the rights of individuals. I suggest that, to some extent at least, impatience and irritation have a lot to do with the Secretary of State's decision to invoke the exceptionally rare method of proceedings of a confirmation Bill.

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

Before turning to that question in some detail, may I ask the Secretary of State whether he has yet responded to a letter of 8 November from Susan Hoyle of Transport 2000? Jonathan Roberts of Transport 2000 was refused admission to the Department of Transport press conference on the Okehampton bypass on 8 November. It was apparently on the ground that the Department of Transport feared that someone would damage the bypass exhibition. Although the Department has only once invited Transport 2000 to a press conference, it has never been refused access to a press conference.

Transport 2000 is an eminently respectable organisation. The Secretary of State may find some of its opinions incompatible with his own and he may feel discomfited at some of the criticism that it makes of him, but surely that is no reason for withholding the right of access to his press conferences. I trust that he will send his apologies to Susan Hoyle for that regrettable episode, and give a categorical asssurance that in future invitations will be sent to Transport 2000.

With regard to the procedure adopted by the Minister to overturn the decision of the Joint Committee which recommended a northern route, in his statement of 26 July this year, and again today, the Secretary of State drew attention, I think with some relish, to the precedent of the Mid-Northamptonshire Water Board Bill. He said that it was done by the Labour Government and that there was nothing unique or unconstitutional about what the Government are now doing. The Secretary of State was making what he thought to be a perfectly fair debating point, but he neglected to tell the House, either on the earlier occasion or today, of the reaction of Conservative Members to the procedure. Lieutenant-Colonel Elliot, Mr. Charles Williams, Mr. Orr-Ewing, Mr. Manningham-Buller and others all savagely attacked the use of procedure.

Lieutenant-Colonel Elliot said:

"here is a decision of a Joint Committee of both Houses which the Minister in this Bill seeks to overturn. I suggest first of all that this is the use of the veto in circumstances to which it is quite inappropriate to apply it and to which it was never expected it would be applied."—[*Official Report*, 4 May 1949; Vol. 464, c. 1045.]

I also take that view.

The Secretary of State may very well say that circumstances were different, but they were different in two ways. First, they were Tories complaining bitterly at the actions of Labour Ministers. Secondly, in addition to the passage from the *Official Report* that the Secretary of State quoted, I remind him that Mr. Arthur Greenwood gave a pledge that the Act would not be used to beat down opposition. Mr. Greenwood said:

"I give the most specific assurance that we do not regard this Bill as a weapon with which to beat down opposition or to carry proposals through without due regard to all the interests who ought to be considered." —[*Official Report*, 14 November 1945; Vol. 415, c. 2180.]

We all understand the constitutional dictum that one Government cannot bind another Government, and the Secretary of State may very well say that he is not bound by such a pledge. Given his own cavalier disregard for the law, we could not expect him to be bound by such a pledge. His claim that he is acting according to precedent has a rather hollow ring to it.

The Joint Committee looked into the issues with very serious deliberation. The Ministry should not disregard that consideration and seek to make short cuts in parliamentary procedure. Although everyone is in agreement on the need for a bypass, there is profound disagreement on the merits of the southern route as compared with the northern route. We have a straightforward conflict of interests between the protection of the environment and the national park on the one hand, and the defence of farming land on the other.[HON. MEMBERS: "No".] Yes, a detailed examination of the inspector's report shows that he argued the case against taking away agricultural land. Make no mistake about that. The Government are displaying their well-known predilection for favouring the farming lobby against all other interests.

That the interests of the national parks need to be vigorously defended is well recognised, and is the basis of the environment circular 4/76 which the Minister quoted, and circular 7/76, which was the equivalent Welsh Office circular. That followed the report of the National Parks Policies Review Committee chaired by Lord Sandford. It is worth quoting paragraph 58 of circular 4/76 in some detail. It says:

"It is now the policy of the Government that investment in trunk roads should be directed to developing routes for long distance traffic which avoid national parks; and that no new routes for long distance traffic should be constructed through a national park, or existing road upgraded, unless it has been demonstrated that there is a compelling need which would not be met by any reasonable alternative means. Application of the policy to some parks does, however, give rise to particularly difficult decisions because of their geographical location".

Several questions arise and require to be answered. First, is there a feasible alternative route? Secondly, is there a compelling need which cannot be met by a reasonable alternative route?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman referred to a "feasible" alternative route. The circular says "reasonable". Was that a slip of the tongue or was it deliberate?

Mr. Hughes: No, it was not a slip of the tongue, it was deliberate. I am sure that the Minister has read every word of the inspector's report. I will not pretend to have gone that far. The Minister will know that the inspector sometimes speaks about "feasible" routes as well as "reasonable" routes. Therefore, the use of the word "feasible" instead of "reasonable" is deliberate and the answer to the first question is yes.

From the mid-1960s until the mid-1970s the proposals related to a northern route. In making their traffic proposals for the Okehampton bypass, the councils in that area used the northern route. A southern route was considered only in 1976.

The answer to the second question depends upon the definition of "reasonable." The inspector who conducted the local public inquiries did not reject the proposition that a northern route was feasible. He made a qualitative, balanced judgment—that the price that would have to be paid for avoiding the national park was too high.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that this will set a very dangerous precedent? Arguments about cost will have to be considered in future and they will carry the day.

Mr. Hughes: Yes. That is one of the serious concerns of those who are opposed to the southern route. Although the Secretary of State argues that this will not be a test case, many people regard it as a test case.

If one looks at the circular which announced the decision of the Secretary of State for Transport and Secretary of State for the Environment on 16 September 1983—CSW240 1/26/013—one sees that in paragraph 27 they say that they

"agree with the Inspector that 'substantial expenditure would be justified in order to construct the bypass on route that would avoid the National Park, provided that this can reasonably be done.'"

The Secretaries of State agreed that substantial expenditure would be justified. If we look at the full text of paragraph 2767 of the main report, we find that the inspector said:

"Thus, it would be right in my view to accept a somewhat greater length of road, somewhat greater cost, the taking of somewhat more good agricultural land and some landscape effects in the northern countryside. Such disadvantages and the possible advantages require assessment, and I will consider them below."

Therefore, we have, first, the use of this delightful, all-encompassing word "reasonable" which appears again and again in the documents.

Having made those very strong statements, it is difficult to understand why the inspector decided in favour of the southern route. However, we can conclude that in rejecting the northern route, on the ground that the price to be paid would be too high, we are speaking not just about cash. The Secretary of State has conceded that the expenditure of extra cash on the northern route would be justified on account of the environmental issues. What are the reasons, therefore, for rejecting the northern route?

Paragraph 28 of the same letter discussed the balancing factors: the disruption of other activities and the disruption of the environment north of Okehampton. On balance, the Secretary of State has decided in favour of the southern route. His judgment is, however, strongly contested by the Countryside Commission.

In case any hon. Member is in any doubt about the locus of the Countryside Commission, I should point out that it is the Government's statutory adviser on landscape conservation matters in England and Wales and that it has special responsibilities for the national parks. The Countryside Commission has always favoured a northern route. It submitted to the local public inquiry a line of route and expressed its disappointment with the decision that favoured a southern route. It welcomed the decision of the Joint Committee that

"the northern route provides a reasonable alternative means."

In this case, it believes that the national interest lies in protecting the national park. Its judgment is absolutely clear cut.

There are compelling reasons for the House to reject the southern route and to direct the Secretary of State to proceed with the northern route. There remains only one other reason, therefore, for passing this confirmation Bill —delay. I have received heartfelt pleas from several organisations which say that the issue of the Okehampton bypass has stuttered on for 20 years and that they have suffered enough from traffic congestion; they need a new road to assist commercial and industrial developments and to provide new jobs, so for goodness sake let us get on with it. Some of them have said to me that the conservationists represent no more than trendy, middle-class, bourgeois ideas. I reject that view.

Throughout history, working-class people have always suffered the most because, in the drive for industrialisation, the environment has been neglected. That neglect has not been confined to industry. In modern times there have been the most appalling errors of judgment over the building of some of our municipal housing estates. Tower blocks have been demolished because they have proved to be so awful. One housing estate in London which was completed only three years ago is, I believe, such an environmental disaster that the gravest of difficulties are experienced over getting tenants for it. Although I make those criticisms of modern housing estates, I do not challenge the good faith of those councillors who had to take the decisions; they were reacting with speed to try to solve the chronic condition of bad housing in which so many people had to live. In this case, therefore, delay itself is no justification for reaching the wrong conclusion.

If, however, there were to be inordinate delay, I concede that we may have to swallow the environmental damage to the Dartmoor national park as the lesser of two evils. But the length of the delay lies entirely in the hands of the Secretary of State. He argues that delay in its completion will amount to six years. There is, however, strong evidence to the contrary. The Countryside Commission has drawn to our attention the evidence of Mr. Parker, a highway and engineering witness. The Secretary of State does his case no good by referring to "so-called" expert witnesses. I take the view that those who give evidence do so in good faith. I accept the expertise of the Secretary of State's witnesses, even though I do not necessarily accept their evidence. I hope that he will be "cannie", as we say in Scotland, about casting doubt upon the integrity and value of independent witnesses.

The Countryside Commission sought an independent assessment of Mr. Parker's evidence. It was obtained from Mr. Singleton, of Denis Wilson and Partners, consulting engineers and transport planners. Both have said that the delay caused by switching back to the northern route need not be more than two or three years. This weighed heavily with the Joint Committee. In paragraph 6 it said:

"The further delay this decision is likely to cause before Okehampton can be relieved of traffic congestion was seriously considered by the Committee. They therefore asked the Department of Transport to accord the highest priority to the construction of a by-pass to the north of the town. The Committee believe that, given good will, commitment and co-operation, this can be achieved in a significantly shorter timetable than was suggested in evidence."

According to the Joint Committee, the essence of speed depends upon good will, commitment and co-operation.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): Could the hon. Gentleman draw to the attention of the House the fact that bypasses have been built from scratch within two or three years from the day upon which the plans were issued?

Mr. Hughes: I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not misunderstand me. I am not suggesting that the bypass could be built in two or three years. The evidence suggests that the delay in the completion of the northern route could be about two or three years, not six years as has been argued by the Secretary of State. We are saying not that the bypass could be completed in two or three years but that it could be completed in a much shorter period than six years.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Is the hon. Gentleman, on behalf of the Opposition, adopting the fallacy that a public inquiry after the present Session of Parliament could not find in favour of the southern route and put us back where we are now?

Mr. Hughes: I am not under that impression. I shall come later to the need for a fresh public inquiry, if the hon. Gentleman has a little patience.

In connection with the issue of speed and delay, I should like to commend to the Secretary of State the Prime Minister's answer to a question from the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller). The hon. Gentleman asked the Prime Minister:

"Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind during her busy day the problems of less successful areas such as the west country, where decisions about road planning have been too long delayed, and where implementation of plans have been delayed even further?"

The Prime Minister replied:

"Yes, Sir. My hon. Friend has been to see me about this matter. He has complained bitterly about the length of time taken to reach decisions. I share his opinion that planning decisions take far too long, and I shall do what I can to speed up the decision in which he has a particular interest." — [*Official Report*, 14 November 1985; Vol. 86, c. 685.]

I think that the Secretary of State can earn himself some Brownie points with the Prime Minister if he commits himself to accepting that a northern route could be delivered with a delay of two to three years.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman said that "given good will" a faster speed could be achieved. May I make it clear to him that the people who live along the northern route and those who objected to that route, of whom there are many, do not have good will in this matter. They made it abundantly clear that they would object to a northern route and would fight it tooth and nail. The hon. Gentleman cannot, therefore, assume that there is good will. That, of course, invalidates his whole perspective.

Mr. Hughes: As I read the Joint Committee's report, which referred specifically to urging the Department of Transport to act, we are asking for good will from the Secretary of State. That may be too much to expect. We are asking, as the Countryside Commission said, for more management efficiency in administration in the Department of Transport. That is something that we would expect to have anyway.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Is the hon. Gentleman urging my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to override the rights of the people living along the northern route? That is what he seems to be saying.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman must not try to put words into my mouth. I am not suggesting that the rights of individuals should be overridden. By this confirmation Bill, the Secretary of State is overriding the rights of individuals. He is adopting this procedure, which is unusual even though it may be constitutionally proper.

The Secretary of State and, I gather, many of his Back-Bench colleagues have said that, in order to look at the alternative of a southern route, we must start with an entirely fresh public inquiry. Goodness knows how long such an inquiry would take. That inspector might not reach the correct conclusion. The views of those who objected to the northern route have been well canvassed. It is not necessary to start from scratch, because the issues have been thoroughly argued. Is the Secretary of State saying that in all matters affecting transport planning—many will arise in the near future—he will hold a full public inquiry? The right hon. Gentleman should give us a clear assurance.

I believe that the interests of protecting the national park are compelling. The northern route is a feasible and reliable alternative. The delay need not be longer than two to three years. Such a delay would be tolerable. The balance of judgment on all counts is weighted against the Secretary of State. Whatever he may say, he is putting bureaucracy before democracy and his departmental case before that of the Joint Committee. I therefore have no hesitation in recommending to my right hon. and hon. Friends that they join me in the Lobby to oppose the Bill.

4.24 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Rippon (Hexham): The essence of the speech of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) was that, if he were Secretary of State, he would, having weighed all the evidence, have rejected the advice and recommendations made by the independent inspector after the 96-day inquiry. In other words, he was saying that the House should substitute his judgment for that of the other people concerned, especially the Secretaries of State. In the end, it is all a matter of judgment and balance. I think we all accept that the issues are of national as well as local concern. We have little opportunity to debate the application of planning policies generally to particular cases.

From my experience, I know the agonies that Secretaries of State have to go through in weighing often bitterly opposing, deeply felt views and then coming to a decision. We must accept that, sooner or later in these matters of national and local importance, decisions must be made by someone. In the absence of compelling reasons to the contrary, I should have thought that it was right that the views of the Secretaries of State should be upheld, especially when they follow the recommendations of an independent inspector.

Over the years we have devised a system of public participation in the planning process that has reached the point where controversial but necessary development is being held up—perhaps for decades. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North says that everyone agrees that something must be done in this case. He thinks that there should be a northern route and that somehow the necessary planning procedures need not be followed. Some people will never accept that the point has been reached where a decision must be taken. We must examine our planning processes so that decisions can be taken and supported.

Recently, a Minister was discussing with his French opposite number how he dealt with difficult planning issues — roads, nuclear power stations and the rest. Reportedly, the French Minister replied with a shrug, "If you want to clear the swamp, you do not consult the frogs." There is a real danger that frustration with our planning processes could lead to an over-violent reaction.

It is wrong when considering the development of docklands or enterprise zones to hold no public inquiry. We have concluded that there should be no such public inquiry because people have become frustrated by delays. In the case of the Okehampton bypass, there have been 17 years of design and public consultation. Finally, after an inquiry lasting 96 days — my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that 58 were devoted to the question of incursion on the national park — the independent inspector said that in his judgment, the total price that would be paid for avoiding the national park was too high. He gave a number of reasons, none of which were dealt with by the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North.

This is the time for all of us to apply common sense. Projects that took a few months to decide in the 1950s are

taking an unconscionable time to decide now, and that must be stopped. A balance between the democratic right to object and the need to take a decision in the general national and public interest must be found. This is not a new problem. When I was Secretary of State for the Environment — that Department then encompassed Transport—I thought that the delays were unreasonable. Obviously, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister takes the same view. This is not an easy matter to resolve.

I appointed Mr. George Dobry—he is now Judge Dobry—to look into the development control system. He made a number of recommendations, many of which have been implemented. For the run-of-the-mill inquiry I think it is fair to say that the Departments have speeded up the process, but there is still no improvement in respect of major inquiries such as the one that we are considering. One solution might be to impose a time limit—to have a guillotine — to combine speed with fairness. We cannot go on as we are at present without bringing the planning process into disrepute. My right hon. Friend might ask Judge Dobry to update his report.

It is unreasonable for the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North to suggest—whatever views he might have about delays in public inquiries—that we could arbitrarily in one case abrogate the planning processes that are laid down.

Objectors at inquiries usually fall into two classes. There are the local participants, some of whom say,

"We won't have heaven crammed,
Let all the rest be damned."

There are other objectors who say, "We must have a road, but not where I don't want it." They will never accept another point of view. Then there are national interest groups. Where there is a conflict between local opinion and the national interest groups, which are entitled to express a view, the balance of argument should be drawn in favour of the local people.

We know that a majority of the local members on the county council and local authorities favoured the southern route. I see no overriding reason why the House, with representatives from all other parts of the country, should override local interest in this case.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that when Devon county council last voted, the vote was 38 to 34? Although I respect much of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's argument, it is not as if it were national conservation bodies against overwhelming local opinion. Local opinion is divided. The county council vote reflects that clear division.

Mr. Rippon: On the other hand, we are told that it would be wrong to take account of the fact that the vote in the Select Committee was four to two. The Opposition cannot have it both ways. All that we can do, using our best judgment, is to ask, "Where does the balance of advantage lie?" I am aware of how difficult these matters are. I remember when there was a proposal for a Winchester bypass. Because it was to go through part of Winchester college's playing fields, I received a letter from virtually every living Old Wykehamist putting across their interest. However, they did not mind whether the road went straight through the nave of Winchester cathedral. The balance of advantage in that case lay in the proposed route against another that would have done more environmental damage.

I was also interested in a comparable case involving a national park, when I had to deal with the proposal that the A66 go through a national park. For some time, I was burned in effigy, but luckily in no other way. I have refreshed my memory about that case. It occurred in 1972. There were alternative proposals for a route that was outside the national park, but on the inspector's recommendation, after much heart searching, I came to the conclusion that the balance of public advantage, locally and nationally, lay in approving a route that went partly through the national park because on balance it did less damage to the environment than the alternative.

I am pleased to say that my decision at that time had the support of the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I notice that he has not signed the motion before the House. It would have been difficult for him to do so, because he gave evidence at the public inquiry into the A66. He rejected the idea that another route should be chosen merely because it lay outside the national park. He pointed out, as I think is correct, that a national park boundary does not mark a point beyond which environmental considerations should not apply. He also pointed out that the A66 improvements, which were being urged by all the local authorities, would not be accomplished by going for the alternative route. All that, in every case, is a matter of judgment. It is significant that the Opposition spokesman on the environment took a view different from the one apparently now being taken by those Opposition Members who put down the motion.

The fact that a route passes through a national park, although even peripherally, is a weighty matter. It is not a conclusive matter. That is the burden of the 1976 circular, which, of course, came after my decision, but it was before the Labour Government's decision to prefer the southern route. Clearly, the Labour Government accepted that there were circumstances in which a route could go through a national park.

It is not reasonable for the House to go against the independent inspector's recommendation, backed by the Secretaries of State, merely because of the Joint Committee's findings.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Why does the right hon. and learned Gentleman say that it is right to accept the inspector's views but not those of the Joint Committee?

Mr. Rippon: The inspector presided over the inquiry on the spot for 96 days. He was interested in studying in detail the views expressed by the proponents of and those against the northern and southern routes. Both Secretaries of State supported that recommendation. As I understand the position, the matter was referred to the Joint Committee only because of the issue of the open space. It would not have had referred to it the issue whether the route should go through the national park. It would never have considered the matter. It was considering the effect on the open space of the legal inability to provide compensation.

Mr. Rost: My right hon. and learned Friend would not wish to deceive the House. The Joint Committee might have sat for only 16 or 17 days, but nevertheless its inquiry consisted of hearing evidence from petitioners as to whether there was a reasonable alternative to the compulsory requisition of that land. That involved

[Mr. Rost]

considering whether any evidence had arisen since the public inquiry which might have changed the balance of judgment.

Mr. Rippon: My view is that the Committee went rather beyond what was required. The 15 days' sittings should have been devoted to the issue that it was required to judge—the open space issue. It dealt with the issue as one of national parks policy. That is not what it had to consider. The Committee said that the orders should not be made on national parks policy grounds; not on the ground that the open space that was to be taken was valuable and could not be replaced.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: My right hon. and learned Friend was asked why he should prefer the inspector to the Joint Committee. Will he confirm that the inspector was duty bound to hear petitioners against the northern route, but the Joint Committee was not permitted to and did not? That must be a convincing reason, in natural justice, why my right hon. Friend should attach more weight to the independent inspector's report.

Mr. Rippon: That was the next point on my note.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I am sorry.

Mr. Rippon: I am glad that my hon. Friend made that point, because it is important. As he said, during 15 sittings the Committee heard the petitioners' evidence. It never heard anything from the people who preferred the southern route. I do not call that satisfactory.

Mr. Rost: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend would wish me to put the record straight. More than half the Joint Committee's time was taken up by the Department of the Environment putting forward its witnesses in support of its proposals against the petitioners. It acted like a court of appeal and heard witnesses who were against the northern route.

Mr. Rippon: With respect, that is a fallacious point. The Select Committee is not, and should not act as, a court of appeal, reopening every issue dealt with at the inquiry. The Select Committee heard witnesses from the Department of the Environment. It may not have thought much of them, but that was not the issue before it. Perhaps it was no fault of the Committee, but it did not have an opportunity to hear the objectors to the northern route, and that is not a satisfactory basis upon which to reject the Bill.

Mr. Steen: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for signing my early-day motion opposing the southern route for the Okehampton bypass, but his action does not quite bear out what he is saying. On the matter of open space, he has rightly pointed out that the sole task of the Joint Committee was to look at the open space issue. Because no open space had been offered by the Government to replace the open space that would have been taken by the southern route, the Committee met and 10 petitioners petitioned and spent £50,000 of private money putting forward their case. A couple of weeks ago the Government found public open space. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Joint Committee need never have met? We need not be meeting today on a confirming Bill if the open space that is now on the table and being offered to the nation had been offered prior to the Joint Committee being convened. For that reason, the Secretary of State has delayed the building of the Okehampton bypass, and he should recompense the national petitioners for the money that they have wasted.

Mr. Rippon: I understand my hon. Friend to be saying that there is no need to oppose the Bill, and that it is only a matter of compensation for expenditure that need not have occurred. I accept what my right hon. Friend said about the problems of paying compensation, or repaying the costs of people involved in litigation, either in the courts or at public inquiries. That raises many difficult issues. I am glad that, in effect, my hon. Friend is withdrawing his objection to the Bill, because he says it should never have gone before the Select Committee. What I ought to say is that I should withdraw my name from his motion. I fell into a trap, and that is something that one sometimes does in this House. One looks at something and says, "Yes, that is reasonable. I support that. There seems to be a lot of opposition to the southern bypass." I must now confess that having thought in more depth in the light of debate, and having studied voluminous literature sent to me by everybody, I have come to the conclusion that the Bill ought to be passed. I am reinforced in that view by what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that virtually every other Tory Member of the House has had exactly the same reaction? Having studied the matter in depth, they are equally disposed towards the Bill.

Mr. Rippon: I am grateful for that information. I quite agree. I am completely convinced by the arguments of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the constitutional point. There is no merit at all in the argument that there would be something unconstitutional in reversing the findings of the Joint Committee. The 1945 Act clearly provides that orders will fall unless the Government decide to bring forward a confirming Bill. That has been done in this case, and in answering a question my right hon. Friend gave a precedent where it had been done before. It is clear that in 1945 the Labour Government said that in appropiate circumstances the Government would have to act in that way, and that clearly must be right.

My own view is that the joint Secretaries of State have statutory responsibiliies, and Parliament must also have the right to review the findings of one of its own Committees. It is for this House to decide whether the order should be made. This is an extremely difficult case, and there are deeply felt views on all sides, but it seems to me on the evidence that the Secretary of State has made the right decision about the best way to proceed. I hope that the House will support the Bill.

4.45 pm

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): To say that this issue has caused some interest and excitement in the far south-west of the nation is putting it rather mildly. There may be questions about whether a full day of parliamentary time is required to make a decision about a bypass around what is, after all, a rather small town some 250 miles from here. That is something some of us may wish to reflect upon on another occasion. The simple fact of the matter is that a decision is asked for and has to be made. I ask for the forebearance of the House so as to mention Cornwall.

Mr. Steen: Oh dear.

Mr. Penhaligon: The hon. Member says, "Oh dear." That is his attitude and I recognise that.

This is the main road for the county of Cornwall. On more than one occasion I have been delighted to accept the company of one of my right hon. or hon. Friends on the drive to my part of the country. Sometimes when we are driving down the A30 they say to me, "It's very nice of you, David, to take us by the picturesque route." I have to reply, "This is not the picturesque route; this is the main road." The A30 through Okehampton and through the rest of the villages that run from there down to Launceston, has long been known as Britain's longest lane, but it is the main artery for business and commerce and for all the activities for at least four fifths of Cornwall. That four fifths takes in my constituency, the constituencies of the hon. Members for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd) and, of course, the constituency of the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale). It affects less the constituency of the hon. Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) but for the other four of us, it is overwhelmingly the main road to our part of the world.

The economic difficulties affecting my part of the world are substantial. We hear endless talk in this House about the great north-south divide. I do not complain that hon. Members from the north draw to the attention of the House the difficulties they face. I often listen to them abusing the south, but as far as the argument goes, I am a part of the north. Today I looked up the latest unemployment figures for the towns the A30 serves. The figures are comparable to those anywhere else in the nation. In Falmouth 24·9 per cent. of the male population is currently registered as unemployed and receiving benefit. In St. Ives, Penzance 26·1 per cent. of the male population is in this position. I will read them all so that hon. Members can see I am not just picking out the worst ones.

In Redruth 22·8 per cent. of the male population is unemployed. My own Truro — which for reasons for which I claim some credit is better than the rest—has a male unemployment figure of 14·9 per cent. St. Austell is the bright spot with 13·2 per cent. Newquay has 27·6 per cent., Bude 18·3 per cent., Helston 23·6 per cent. and Okehampton, ironically, has 13·9 per cent. Bodmin and Liskeard is 20·2 per cent. and Launceston is just short of 14 per cent.

Those are the levels in an area 100 miles long. We are not talking about one suburb in an urban area, but about an immense expanse. Besides that—this is a statistical fact and not a new one — Cornwall has the lowest average wage of any county in Great Britain. That is the situation we face. Sometimes these things cut across party channels, and those of us in the south-west who have been trying to do something for the economy, for our homes, or part of the world and our people, time and time again meet industrialists. They show some interest because Cornwall has much to be said for it. It is clean and basically law-abiding and has a good work force. But when those people we meet go down to the south-west they take one look at the A30 and that is the end of that.

Of course, it affects not just the industrialists we try to attract. I wonder how many tourists are put off visiting the county of Cornwall in August? I never cease to be amazed at the sheer bravery of people who set off from London to go to Cornwall during the summer. One can get from London to Madrid a great deal quicker than one can get from here to the other end of our nation. Often at peak times there are 13 to 14-mile queues outside Okehampton, and on a normal weekend those queues are five or six miles long. That is the reality of the position as it affects those who look at Okehampton from our end. Okehampton is in between where I live and here, whereas for most hon. Members it is at the end of the road, somewhere almost beyond all civilised thought.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I agree with what the hon. Gentleman said about the length of time it takes to get through Okehampton. As a regular user of that road to go on holiday every year, I can assure him that the Okehampton police make a lovely cup of tea first thing on a Saturday morning, and many times have I sampled that delight.

Mr. Penhaligon: What we will do in the south-west to make a shilling out of tourism is beyond compare.

I shall ensure that our police are supplied with free tea for the hon. Gentleman, even when the road is built.

One of the ironies of the argument about the road is that most of those living in Devon will be no more affected by it than those living in Shropshire, Aberdeen or anywhere else. Okehampton is very much at the end of Devon. Those who will be most affected live in the areas covered by the West Devon district authority, the Okehampton town council and the Cornwall county council. I beg the House to take my word for the fact that, for a number of reasons, opinion is overwhelmingly in favour of the building of a bypass as soon as is conceivably possible.

On checking "Erskine May", I discovered that I am allowed to do something in this Chamber that I had not thought would be allowed. For the edification of the House, I have brought with me a map of Devon. Apparently I can display what I want, provided that it is not a weapon. The map may be argued to be a weapon, but not in the context of "Erskine May".

Hon. Members who can see this far across the Chamber will realise that I am holding a map of my part of the world. Towards the top is Exeter, as the hon. Member who represents that area will confirm, and towards the bottom is Plymouth. Cornwall runs away one way and England runs away the other way—if hon. Members understand the way that I phrase that.

The Dartmoor national park is outlined accurately with a green line. It was done by professional cartographers and is not one of my efforts. Hon. Members with good enough eyesight will see that that covers a not inconsiderable expanse of the map — indeed, 233,000 acres. Hon. Members wishing to see the proposed road that we are discussing will need very good eyesight indeed, because it comprises six little red dots in the top corner. That is the size of the issue that has been brought to the House, and which has dominated and disadvantaged the economy of my part of the world. Objectors talk about the intrusion and the rape of Dartmoor, yet the road comprises only that little line of red dots across the top of the map. Therefore, I find the importance given to the issue quite extraordinary.

For those whose eyesight is not good enough, I shall use some of the training that I received as an engineer. The Chamber in which we have the opportunity to argue our case is approximately 24 panels wide and 60 panels long.

[Mr. Penhaligon]

The actual amount to be slivered off the Dartmoor national park is proportionately equivalent to three panels square —the space occupied by less than two civil servants in their box. That is the rape of Dartmoor. Yet people claim that the road is being driven straight through the middle. Some of the arguments are quite nonsensical and of little merit.

Let us examine the 460 acres that it is alleged will be slivered off the top of Dartmoor. I know Okehampton well, and to say that I have been there and looked at it on a number of occasions would be an understatement. Many hon. Members will also have been there on a number of occasions. The largest bit of the 460 acres that will be affected is a golf course. Now I am all for the people of Okehampton having the maximum opportunity to play golf, but to argue that the entire environment is being destroyed because a golf course is affected is nonsense.

The second largest area affected is what is romantically called—not only in the south-west, but elsewhere—a medieval deer park. I, like many other people, at one time was foolish enough to wonder just what a medieval deer park was. I have to tell the House that it is a place where deer were kept up to about 300 years ago. In other words, there are no deer there now and there have been no deer there for a long time. Unless, suddenly, deer should come back as the great solution to west country agriculture, I suspect that there will be no deer there in future. The remainder of the land involved is woodland and the areas surrounding the castle. The castle will actually be further from the main road, given that that improvement occurs, than it is now.

The woodlands have already been discussed today. The area has become known as the bluebell woods. I have received letters from anxious people in various parts of Britain telling me that I am committing one of the great outrages of all time because the bluebell is an endangered species. In all honesty and with all the vigour that I can muster, I must insist—people can take my word for it or not as they please—that the bluebell is not an endangered species in the south-west. There are acres and acres of them. Indeed, it would not be difficult to find people who would argue that the bluebell is a weed, although I hasten to add that that is not my view.

There is no doubt that the Government's current position on tree planting is a great improvement on their previous position. We must give the objectors full credit for that because it has been achieved largely as a result of their efforts. As the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) said, there has been much effort recently to find open space, and I believe that open space to be better than the previous open space because it is nearer Okehampton. People already use it. Some of the original open space is certainly space, but is not open—unless one is 6 ins high and can go under, or more than 20 feet high and can climb over.

Let us honestly examine what we are discussing. The truth is that moors do not start as conveniently as the 1948 Act suggests. By definition, the Act forces someone to draw a line on a map. That line must have zero width because that is the nature of legislation. Moors do not start like that—there is a gradual change in the land from what is obviously moor to what is obviously not moor. I suspect that many cartographers and geographers of the highest standards would have great arguments about whether certain parts were or were not moor.

My honest view is that the piece of land that we are discussing cannot be described as moor. It is true that it is on a slope running up to what I believe to be moor, but the actual area is most definitely not moor. Such is the geography of the land that the road will blend in extremely well. If the trees are given a reasonable chance, which clearly they will be, before long the road will be hardly noticeable.

One of the great ironies of the argument is that when people visit the moor—as they do in large numbers, which I understand because I do so often myself——

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Two million of them.

Mr. Penhaligon: I do not deny that figure. The moors are a major attraction in my area, and parts of them are beyond compare in Britain. When people visit the moor they tend to stand on it and look outwards. They do not go to the nearest agricultural area and look inwards to the moor.

If the road is the southern route and one stands on the moor looking out, there is not the least possibility of the road being seen. It is true that if one went from the other side of Okehampton and stood in the middle of a barley field—I admit that some visitors do that, though not many, thank goodness—and cast one's eyes across the moor one would be able to see the road, but the ratio of those on the moor looking out to those on the outside looking in must in this case be in the order of several hundreds to one.

I am convinced that the southern route is the preferable one, although I confess that my starting point in the argument was a desperate anxiety on behalf of the community that I try to represent in the House to promote a road that represents the present decade and century. I have been forced to investigate the matter and I believe that the intrusion of the proposed road into the moor is so insignificant that it makes no difference to the great space that is Dartmoor. I do not believe that it constitutes the precedent that some hon. Members have argued because I believe that moors and other great beauty spots will live or die on their own merits.

It is generally agreed that if this House and the other place vote as I would like them to, we could have the southern route in about three years. The optimists argue that we could have the northern route in approximately six years—that is, three years' delay and two or three years to build the road. The pessimists argue that the northern route would actually take nine or 10 years. I believe that the truth is probably somewhere between the two, but the House must not underestimate the sheer vigour with which the anti-northern route people would fight that proposal if it came back to the House. They believe that they defeated the Devon establishment on this issue at a public inquiry which lasted 96 days. I was rather surprised that they pulled off that triumph, not because of the merits of the argument but because of the vigour with which some anti-southern route people pursued their case.

As the Minister knows, the coward's way out of this would be to have the road put around the north, but it would be an outrage for the House to suggest that the solution to the agonising dilemma my constitutents face is

to take away from them the right to argue their case again if this vote is lost. If another inquiry is necessary, it will be a significant one. One would hope that it would not last for 96 days but insanity may go that far again. There will certainly be significant and vigorous argument and the House need not kid itself that if we vote in a particular way today the northern route will suddenly be acceptable.

Mr. Steen: If the House throws out the confirming Bill, would the hon. Member agree that it would not be proper to open a future inspection and inquiry into the southern route? If the southern route goes ahead, it will take traffic out of the centre of Okehampton. The hon. Gentleman says that it will also revive the economy of Cornwall, but it will simply move the bottleneck from the centre of Okehampton to an area four miles west of Okehampton. The hon. Member knows that the road between Okehampton and Weston is still single track and that it would be six more years before a dual carriageway could be constructed to Okehampton. If the northern route were constructed there would be a continuous dual carriageway to Tongue End just outside of Okehampton running east through to Launceston. Does the hon. Member agree that building the southern route would not help the economy of Cornwall but would simply jam up the dual carriageway four miles west of Okehampton?

Mr. Penhaligon: The hon. Member knows that I do not agree with that. There is a marvellous Cornish definition of the word "expert". The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) was talking about experts earlier on. My somewhat cynical Cornish friends define an expert as a man from 50 miles away. Sometimes when I listen to the hon. Member for South Hams discussing these matters, I take a similar view to that of my Cornish friends.

I do not defend the attitudes of successive Governments towards improving the A30. If successive Governments had applied themselves to the problem, we would not be in the present difficulty. One of the significant problems created by arguments to the bypass is that the bypass is between Cornwall and the dual carriageway that currently exists. Given the present row, we do not know where the Okehampton bypass would start or where it would finish. It will be impossible to build a road to the Okehampton bypass or a road from the bypass until a decision is taken.

Mr. Ridley: I agree with everything that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) has said. I should add for his edification that if this House and another place pass the Bill we shall be able to proceed with the Okehampton to Launceston section. I have asked my Department to give that road full priority and to make it a dual carriageway. If the Bill is not passed there will be no need to do that because the bottleneck will stay in Okehampton.

Mr. Penhaligon: I hope that the Bill will be passed. As the Secretary of State knows, I have previously called the attention of the House to the standard of the road and one likes to believe that occasionally one has some effect and can see changes being made.

The Joint Committee which met to discuss this matter voted by four votes to two to reach its decision and I make no complaint about the outcome. I apologise to the House, however, because I believe that I and other hon. Members made a mistake in connection with the Joint Committee. I read, studied and took advice on what I understood to be the Committee's powers. The general view was expressed —wrongly, as events turned out in my part of the country —that there was no purpose once again in going to the Committee and arguing in favour of the southern route and not the northern route because the Committee was not allowed to investigate that point. In fact, the Committee did investigate that point. I do not complain, but the Chairman of the Joint Committee did not get the anti-north lobby in full flood before him. Local people express their case with more vigour than civil servants, who are sometimes reduced to reading from a map. The reason why the case was not presented was not that it did not exist — the public inquiry showed that it did — but that, perhaps foolishly as it turned out, we believed that the Committee would not be arguing once again the case of northern route versus the southern. That being so, the evidence taken from individuals as opposed to civil servants was totally one-sided.

Mr. Rost: I am sure the hon. Member for Truro will appreciate that the Joint Committee had serious doubts as to what its terms of reference were before it commenced the inquiry. We took the best procedural advice available from the House of Lords Procedure Committee, which advised us that, although the basis of the petitioners' case was the narrow one of open space, that case could not be fairly presented by the petitioners without also allowing them to put the argument against the Dartmoor route. We were therefore obliged to consider the arguments against that route and the arguments presented by the Department of the Environment in favour of it. There was no chance for us to invite witnesses as happens in a normal Select Committee. Our only power was to hear the petitioners' case and the defence put up by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Penhaligon: I thank the hon. Gentleman. It is a legitimate description of what happened and fits in with what I said. We took advice, which was that there was no point in organising the arrival at Westminster of the anti-north route view. I do not think the hon. Gentleman was trying to argue that he did not hear that from the local people who held that view so vigorously.

I ask the House not to allow the matter to become a simple party issue. There are in my party divergent views, which I have done my best to correct. We shall see what happens when the vote takes place. I ask hon. Members to examine the merits of the case. After all these years the intrusions within the 1948 boundaries of Dartmoor national park are of such minor significance and the road is to be built in such a way that I ask the House to back the Government and support the Third Reading so that the road can be built as soon as possible and can start to give my part of the country, which has as much right to prosperity as other areas, at least the chance to compete on an even basis.

5.10 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): I think the whole House knows that if my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) had not had an operation recently for the removal of a kidney, he would be here putting, as forcefully as only he can, the case for the route which has been recommended by every democratically elected tier of local government. As he lives in my constituency, and as his constituency adjoins

[Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop]

mine, I hope that the House will be no less favourably disposed to the Government's case than it would be if my hon. Friend were here to put it before the House himself.

The final absurdity from the Opposition Front Bench was the peroration, if it might be dignified with that description, saying that what the Government wanted to do was a triumph of bureaucracy over democracy. The facts are the exact reverse. Every tier of local government supports the route put forward by the Government. The parish council of Okehampton, which is a town council properly elected, favours the route recommended by the inspector and by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State; so do the district council, the county council and Cornwall county council, whose interest in the matter was so ably put before the House by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon).

In the debate on Third Reading it would not be a service to the House for me to repeat the points made by the hon. Member for Truro, which show the extent to which this is not a local issue purely for Okehampton. The prospect of economic recovery for Devon to the west of Okehampton and for Cornwall as a whole will be intimately affected by the decision of the House.

It is more than a decade ago that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, as it is now called, made an investigation into means of promoting economic activities in development areas. I was a member of the Committee that took evidence from business men who had set up new enterprises in the peripheral areas of Britain. We asked them what incentives were decisive with them in locating new enterprises in peripheral areas. In those days, there was relief from selective employment tax, regional economic premium, interest free loans, rent free factories, relief from rates, training grants and a whole catalogue of incentives. But the representative answer was good road communications, because that meant a permanent reduction in costs which no change of Government policy could take away.

The facts that were true then are even more true today. With the tachograph and stricter control of drivers' hours, if it is not possible to get from the source of supply in Cornwall to the market in the midlands, or to the docks and back in a day, double the number of vehicles and double the number of drivers are required. That is enough to deter anyone from bringing new employment to those areas.

Delay in constructing the bypass is a direct cause of avoidable unemployment in the further south-west. Let those who make speeches about unemployment bear that in mind and share the responsibility for continuing avoidable unemployment if they vote against the Bill tonight. I repeat that every layer of local government in the area has expressed itself decisively in favour of the southern route.

I was born in a village on the edge of Dartmoor and lived there as a child. I knew Dartmoor before many of the people who have chosen on retirement or for other reasons to move to the south-west. I love the area. It is where I go with my wife and children to swim, rather than to the coast. Dartmoor will suffer less from the southern route than from the northern route, which would appear like a scar when seen from Dartmoor.

The issue of principle is the issue of good sense against bigotry. Where the frontier of Dartmoor was drawn on the map was a matter not of principle but of judgment. Those who decided on the boundary did not have in mind the sort of performance in which we are engaged if they were to draw it a few hundred yards south. With its present boundary, Dartmoor includes some areas of great ugliness. One would need a peculiar sense of beauty to settle on Meldon quarry as an example to draw to the attention of the House, yet Meldon quarry will be on the Dartmoor side of the proposed road if the House approves the Bill. That is the sort of thing that one should bear in mind.

To a considerable degree, for those familiar with it, the history of Dartmoor as opposed to Exmoor is archaeological rather than natural. The Stanary law which overruled all the normal law of England was centred on the Stanary town in Devon of Tavistock and Lydford. Wheal Jane and the buildings by the mine shafts cannot be destroyed, quite rightly, because they are listed. The heritage of Dartmoor is partly one of untouched natural beauty and partly one of natural resources harnessed to the service of man, as can be seen in the wool towns around Dartmoor, which for centuries, not for decades, have used the rivers flowing from Dartmoor.

Within the last few weeks, as opposed to months, some people have set themselves up as the protectors of Dartmoor, but many others, without labelling themselves, love Dartmoor every bit as much. Those who have set themselves up as a self-appointed protectors of Dartmoor have claimed the right to object to a massive potential source of new employment outside Dartmoor at Hemerdon, a wolfram mine, on the ground that it can be seen from inside the national park.

My right hon. Friend has shown that he can see the force in arguments of that kind. He went there personally to look at what would be visible from Dartmoor if the northern, instead of the southern, route were adopted. What is sauce for the goose must be sauce for the gander. If people say, "We must protect what can be seen from Dartmoor," that must be as important in the north as it is in the south of Dartmoor. It must be inconsistent to put forward that argument in the south and deny it in the north.

A convex slope is one above which one cannot see what is in its shadow below. That is largely where the southern route of the bypass will go and where the existing railway line is, which one does not see from the moor because of that convexity. That is the truth of the matter which one must be familiar with the part of the country to know. Looking at a map—unless one does the old cardboard trick and marks out the contours—one cannot be aware of that.

It has been suggested that the northern route could be adopted without a public inquiry. It could not, and there are many reasons why. Those who are familiar with the compulsory purchase procedures know the view that the High Court has taken when there has been bad faith on the part of the Minister. The Minister is allowed to exercise his judgment in seeking compulsory purchase orders so long as he is exercising good faith. But what if the Minister tries to impose compulsory purchase orders in respect of a northern route when, in good faith, he does not believe that to be necessary in the public interest, nor does he believe it to be the route that is required by the relevant circumstances?

No Parliament can bind its successors. The fact that a Joint Committee of both Houses, split four to two, reached a certain conclusion this Session does not mean that a differently composed Joint Committee in a different Session would come to the same conclusion, even on the

same facts. Do not let those outside Parliament come to believe that a decision made — I attach no particular weight to the fact that it was a split decision; our vote tonight will also be a split decision—by Parliament in this Session binds a Parliament in a successive Session. It does not.

The inspector hearing an inquiry against the objections, which would undoubtedly be massive, to a northern route would be bound to consider the same facts again. He would be no more bound by a decision made by a Joint Committee of six Members drawn from more than 1,200 Members of both Houses in this Session than that Joint Committee was bound by the inspector. What would be the view of an inspector trying the same facts over again? The probability is that he would come to the same conclusion, which would be that the southern route was to be preferred to the northern one.

The Government would then make sure that the open spaces hurdle was crossed — and it was not the Government's fault that it was not crossed earlier. After all, it was not a matter of compulsory purchase orders. Such orders could not have been sustained for that purpose. It was a matter of people being willing to sell their land to facilitate the route, and the Country Landowners Association did an honourable and excellent job in assisting the finding of the land. All credit is due to the association for that. Thus, there would not even be the opportunity of arguing on the basis of what the Committee found on the last occasion, because the circumstances would not warrant such a Committee in the future. We should have only rich lawyers from the public inquiry and poor unemployed people.

I ask the House, therefore, as forcefully as I can, to give its judgment in this matter in accordance with the democratically declared wishes of the town council, which has the legal status of a parish council, in Okehampton, of the district council, of the county councils of Devon and Cornwall, reinforced by an independent inspector after one of the longest public inquiries there has ever been for a bypass. It was, I believe the first such inquiry in which public money from the Consolidated Fund paid for a considerable chunk of the opposition case, through the Nature Conservancy Council, and for the Government's case, through the Department of Transport.

That was a departure. It set a precedent and, on that subject, to argue that one cannot do anything without an exact precedent is to argue that one can never do anything new. Is the Labour party wedded to that doctrine? It is not, so far as I know.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: The hon. Gentleman has not been a Member of the House for long. If he turns up the 18th edition of "Erskine May", he will find in the preface these wise words:

"'old Mr. Ley (Clerk of the House of Commons from 1820 to 1850) used to say "What does it signify about precedents? The House can do what it likes. Who can stop it?"'"

Mr. Hughes: I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman. Long before I entered the House I was aware of his expertise above all in matters of this nature. Will he accept that, once the precedent of breaking into previously inviolate national parks has been established — particularly since the circular of 1976, which the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) accepted, and which came after a decision of his relating to a road in the north of England—national parks, as a matter of public policy, are far less secure?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: No, I do not accept that. The security of national parks depends on reason rather than on law. As I pointed out, the boundary of a national park is drawn, not as a matter of principle, but as a matter of judgment, and the two must never be confused.

Mr. Harris: Will my hon. Friend accept that in many respects the boundaries of the national park, particularly around Oakhampton, are not even a matter of judgment in that they follow the old parish boundaries?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Yes, if that was judged to be a convenient way of doing it. As in so many other matters, lawyers argue law, but at the end of the day the House of Commons is concerned with reason and with doing that which is reasonable.

After the most exhaustive inquiry, when all points of view were exposed, argued, defended and attacked, the inspector published his report. The Secretary of State has made his decision, and on the basis of reason it is fair and reasonable. I ask the House to support that decision, not grudgingly, but willingly.

5.30 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) on his first speech in a transport debate in his new capacity. He deployed his case with considerable skill, agility and dexterity. He had to, because the case was so thin. I have been in that unfortunate position, speaking from Opposition and Government Dispatch Boxes. He acquitted himself well.

The case for the southern route bypass at Okehampton is overwhelming. We should get on with the job. The right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) rightly said that this is a matter not only of local but of national importance. It is not a matter only for Okehampton, Devon or, with respect to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), for Cornwall. It is a national matter. The decision, the procedure and the public inquiry are matters for the nation and there is a practical matter for the nation.

Every hon. Member has hundreds or perhaps thousands of constituents who visit that beautiful part of Britain during the holiday period. Constituents from the north of Scotland to the south of England regularly go to that part of Devon, as do we. Even midweek, not on a Saturday morning, I have been held up in Okehampton while towing a caravan. The volume of traffic in the area is horrendous. I feel sorry for the inhabitants of Okehampton who suffer a constant stream of traffic through their lovely town. Apart from holidaymakers, tourists and those driving cars from their constituencies, another important factor is the professional coach and heavy goods vehicle drivers who have no choice, as the hon. Member for Truro said, but to use the Okehampton route. They have a schedule, a timetable and their time is money. They must drive through and suffer delays in Okehampton.

For that reason my union—I am sponsored by the Transport and General Workers Union — firmly and unequivocally supports the building of the bypass now. Most professional drivers belong to that union, which supports the bypass because it is in the drivers' interests

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

and, as the hon. Member for Truro said, it is in the interests of employment in west Devon and Cornwall. Whenever I have been on the south coast admiring the beaches and the scenery, local business men have said, "Yes, but the area is on the sands for three months and on the rocks for the other nine." I am sure that the hon. Member for Truro would echo that view.

What puzzles me is how we got into such a mess as to make a special Bill necessary. Strangely enough, the Bill has proceeded straight to Third Reading, which I have never experienced in my 21 years in the House. There has been a history of delay. The first inquiry began in 1968 when it was considered that so much congestion called for a bypass. Public consultation took place in 1976 and a public inquiry was held in 1979. As many hon. Members have said, it was one of the longest inquiries in history —96 days. Eleven years elapsed from the time of the first proposals to the inquiry. Normally, one would consider that the Secretary of State would make his decision quickly once the matter had reached the inquiry stage. The public inquiry took place in 1979, but it was not until four years later, in 1983, that the Secretary of State accepted the recommendations of the inspector's report on the public inquiry. I do not blame the present Secretary of State. His predecessor was responsible. Whether it was the Minister's fault or that of the Secretary of State or the inspector, four years is an inordinate delay for a decision on the report.

Mr. Penhaligon: Inquiries were made about what was happening to the report and we were told that the inspector was ill and incapable of writing the report for 18 months. That was the reason given for the remarkable delay.

Mr. Oakes: That was the beginning of what became a chapter of accidents.

Essentially, this is not a planning matter. The planning decision was taken by the inspector and confirmed by the Secretary of State. It is purely fortuitous that, in 1984, a petition of general objection was laid against compulsory purchase orders. That is what the Committee should have considered, rather than reopening and re-examining a 96-day inquiry on which the Secretary of State has already announced his decision. The Committee's decision would put the completion of the bypass back possibly for another 10 or 12 years. On the optimistic time scale that my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North gave, the chapter of accidents could and probably would happen again. Completion could be well into the 1990s and, on the present time scale, it could be the next century before the bypass is built. That is shameful.

Having listened not only to my hon. Friend's skilful arguments, but to the views of the TWGU which represents drivers, I have to say that I cannot support my hon. Friends in the Lobby tonight. That leaves me with a choice between abstention or voting with the Government. To abstain on this matter would be lazy, or at worst, cowardly. With regret, I shall be in the Government Division Lobby tonight.

5.39 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) is unable to be in his place. He has apologised to me for not being here. I feel sure that if my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) had heard the forceful and robust speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton, he would have been proud of it. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West is indisposed. We have long been sparring partners over Dartmoor. I respect his view and I am sorry that we are not able to continue our sparring tonight. I am sure that we all look forward to seeing him back in his place.

Okehampton is at the top of the southern part of the Dartmoor national park and my constituency is connected to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West on the southern part. We join somewhere south of the Fox Tor Mires, just south of Okehampton. The House will therefore appreciate why my view may be somewhat different from that expressed by other hon. Members.

In one way or another I have been associated with Dartmoor for 30 years. I have walked the moors since I was a schoolboy. In most years, I have been on the moors for long periods, and I know it extremely well. No other national park has occupied so much parliamentary time as Dartmoor. In 1980, the first Dartmoor Commons Bill, aimed at providing a proper management of the moor, failed. In June of last year I was invited by the Devon county council to pilot the Dartmoor Commons Bill mark 2 through the House. It was backed not only by the council but by the Department of the Environment, and in addition to the proper management of the moor we managed to secure a great improvement. It not only allowed the proper management of the moors for farmers, which pleased me, but protected the moor's natural beauty and environment, and gave the public a unique statutory right of access to the common land. Second Reading was unopposed both in this House and the other place.

How then is it that, two weeks after the Dartmoor Commons Act was passed, another Bill is brought before the House not by the Department of the Environment but by the Department of Transport, which does exactly the opposite to what the Dartmoor Commons Act has tried to achieve? The Bill will damage the environment, prevent public access to part of the moor and infect an area of Dartmoor with noise and pollution.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I have travelled Dartmoor, and my constituency is immediately adjacent to the future Okehampton bypass. Is my hon. Friend aware of the firing of guns and the presence of troops on Dartmoor? Does he really think that this tiny road incursion will make more noise on Dartmoor than we have already suffered, or enjoyed, for many years?

Mr. Steen: My hon. Friend is, as always, absolutely right. There is intolerable noise in the centre of the national park — my hon. Friend makes the point extremely well, as he always does. The noise is already intolerable but the road will make it even worse.

Four main arguments are advanced by my colleagues and I shall rehearse and deal with them all. The first has been expressed on both sides of the House. It is that the Okehampton bypass, if it goes south, will eat only into the tip of the national park. The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), who has vacated his seat, produced a map to illustrate this point, at which we looked with interest. The second argument is that the national park boundaries were arbitrarily drawn along the old parish boundaries, a point

made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton in his interesting speech. The third point is that the local councils support the southern route and the fourth is that changing the bypass to the northern route would delay its building by at least eight years.

On the first point, while it is true that the road breaches the national park by no more than about half a mile inside its boundaries, the House has not had the advantage of hearing what the scenario is and where the road is going. Even on a 2½ in ordnance survey map, the area looks flat and boring and not at all special. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has been down there, and I think that he will recognise my description of the area.

The southern route will come off the A30 at a place called Tongue End Cross. The road will then fork to the left and go down a small wooded valley to what is called the Fatherford viaduct. This is an old granite bridge, over which the railway runs. Underneath the viaduct is a wonderful, typical Dartmoor river with huge granite boulders. The bypass will go south of that wonderful viaduct, by about 50 to 100 yards, and then it will climb up East Hill, which is about 1,200 ft. This hill is the first buttress of Dartmoor. It is dramatic as it rises from the river at about 400 ft, up a heavily wooded slope to about 1,200 ft. A four-lane viaduct will carry the road, which will start to climb East Hill and swing round a magnificent arc that stretches from East Hill to the Meldon valley through some five miles of trees. The bypass will carve out a piece of the side of the hill, which was formed millions of years ago by water erosion. It is covered by mature deciduous trees that have wonderful colours at this time of the year.

The importance of the road is that it goes on the 600 to 800 ft contour and is not tucked down by the river. It is over halfway up the hill, along the arc of trees, and will thus affect a dramatic sweep of hillside valleys with the river deep below. In the middle of the huge arc are the ruins of a medieval castle on a small hill about 100 ft up. The river goes round the hill with the medieval ruins from which one can get a magnificent view, as it is a small promontory.

Some hon. Members have made a big point out of the fact that there are no deer in the deer park. I accept that, and I do not make an issue out of it.

Mr. Nicholls: There is the golf course.

Mr. Steen: I am not making an issue about the golf course either. I am fond of golf and no doubt my hon. Friend is a good player and has probably realised that one can see spectacular views when one plays golf there. That, too, will be ruined by the new bypass. It is also true that there are not as many bluebells as hon. Members may like in the bluebell woods, but to some extent that does not affect my argument. Nor does it alter the magnificent backdrop behind Okehampton—the wonderful silent and tranquil foothills that are a prelude to the wilderness of the moor beyond.

The southern route will take a chunk of the land on the steep slope, including a medieval trackway and 1,000 mature trees. When the road reaches about 800 ft, it will start to drop again. It will come round the arc for about three or four miles and in dropping will cut across the railway line. British Rail sends about six trains a day each way from the Meldon quarry to Exeter. The train adds a certain colour to the area and a little acceptable noise. After going across the railway line, the road will carve through bluebell woods and join the A30 a few miles west of Okehampton.

Mr. Nicholls: Can my hon. Friend help the House by explaining how Meldon quarry and its associated activities contribute to the marvellously tranquil and silent scene that he is describing?

Mr. Steen: My hon. Friend is well known for missing the point. I shall come to that matter in a moment because one of the contentions that I shall advance, as he listens with interest, is that the fringes of the national parks are being eaten into. That is one of the problems. The quarry is eating into the national park.

Mr. Harris: The quarry was there first.

Mr. Steen: As my hon. Friend says, the quarry was there first.

Before I was understandably interrupted by my hon. Friends, I was trying to say that that panorama will be disturbed. To give the Secretary of State his due—somebody should do that—he has promised 70,000 trees to replace the 1,000 mature trees that will be uprooted. I am not sure where he will put them all. Even if they are crammed extremely close together, I am not sure whether he will get them all in. However, it is a bold and imaginative idea, and an attempt to reduce the noise in that tranquil valley. However, the cost of going south is the intermittent noise that will percolate the wild moor. I ask my hon. Friends to realise that. There will be intermittent noise if there is a four-lane carriageway through a wonderful valley with a wonderful panorama.

Sir John Wells (Maidstone): Can my hon. Friend give us any idea of the numbers of people who currently enjoy that tranquil scene, apart from the quarry men, railway drivers and railway guards? We all enjoy driving up some of the more beautiful stretches of existing motorways. Assuming that the road is built there, how many members of the public, and how many of my constituents travelling to points further west, and how many boat builders and vegetable growers bringing their produce further east, will enjoy that magnificent view instead of being cluttered up in the back streets of Okehampton?

Mr. Steen: I can gladly answer my hon. Friend. Meldon quarry is right at the end of the five mile arc. If one is standing at Okehampton, the arc starts two or three miles on the east. It swings round, and Meldon quarry is five miles to the west. Therefore, it is just outside the area that I am talking about. It is over the ridge.

My hon. Friend asked how many people enjoy that area, which is an important point. I was up there on Sunday, unannounced — *[Interruption.]* A sizeable number of people were walking on the East Hill with children and dogs. I am advised that in the summer months sizeable numbers of people picnic at the river, around the castle. It is one of the popular picnic spots.

My hon. Friend wondered whether lorry drivers would enjoy the area. The answer is no, because the best place to see Dartmoor is from the northern route. If they were driving along the bypass, they would be thick in the 70,000 trees. They would not be able to see anything. They would not be able to see the wood for the trees. They would be jammed in, with the 70,000 trees that the

[Mr. Steen]

Secretary of State is planting. It is better to go on the northern route, where they would get magnificant views of Dartmoor.

However, I shall not be distracted too much by those important questions. I should like to deal with the destruction of the peace. That should not be underestimated. Although it seems to be the tip of the valley on the map of Dartmoor, the whole valley will be spoilt because of the noise. When the wind blows from the north, the noise of the dual carriageway will probably be heard at least a mile into the deep moor. I hope that I am wrong, but that is what I estimate. My principal objection at this stage is that the tranquillity of the foothills of Dartmoor will be spoilt. That damage would be irreparable. No other foothills around the moor are of the same quality. Dartmoor would be worse off.

I should like to deal with the principle, because I believe that that is what my hon. Friends would like to hear. Either national parks are special, or they are not. Either they are to protect the natural beauty of our finest landscape and to promote public enjoyment, which is what they were established to do from 1949, or they are not. Either 1976 Government policy following the Sandford report, which outlaws new roads in national parks when there are reasonable alternatives, is adhered to, or it is not.

Nor is it right to say that we shall not create a precedent, because the Sandford report, as the House will remember, clearly states the exceptions to the rule that one does not build new roads through a national park. Lord Sandford states that the first is where the park lies across important long-distance routes to which, for geographical reasons there is no reasonable alternative, such as the A40 and the A470, which have to go through the middle of the Brecon Beacons because that is the only way to get from Abergavenny to Brecon. The second exception is where parks enclosed towns such as Buxton, Whitby and Blaenau Ffestiniog, which themselves are not within the designated areas, but can be reached only through the park. Thus, the Sandford report, on which the circular was based, specified the two exceptions that Lord Sandford saw would allow the national park boundaries to be breached.

Okehampton, a town with 3,500 souls, is not enclosed by the park: it is outside the national park, and there is no physical barrier to the north to prevent the road going that way. Therefore, why does not the policy of the circular apply? I am glad that the Secretary of State went down to Fatherford bridge the other day. When he looked at the grandeur of the scene, he said that he felt that the southern route was much less damaging to the environment than the northern route. That was his personal view. However, that is not the point. It does not matter what the Secretary of State thinks, although we are always glad to hear it. Although he is known for his good taste and arboreeal expertise, it does not matter whether he fancies the northern or the southern route, because the national parks policy is much bigger than the Secretary of State. The fact is that 7·5 km of the 9 km southern route is in the national park, so it does not matter whether the Secretary of State prefers one route to another. If Government policy says that one does not go through national parks, there must be compelling reasons why it is disregarded.

A suggestion has been made today that this is a fight between the environmentalists and the farmers. I reject that. The farmers whom I know are some of the best conservationists there are. It is wrong to suggest that they are opposed to the southern route or the northern route for the wrong reasons. It is a fact, according to the report, that along the southern route three farms will be more than moderately affected. The northern route will affect only slightly seven farms, three moderately and only one severely. The northern route takes only eight more acres than the southern route but the value of the land has decreased since the introduction of milk quotas. That would be an interesting and relevant issue if there were to be a new public inquiry. The land that was inspected in 1980 was extremely valuable but it has become less valuable since the introducion of milk quotas.

There are no buildings to be lost on the northern route, whereas some are lost on the southern route. On the other hand, the land to the south is far more valuable for recreation, as the inspector said. There are 15 miles of public paths on the southern route and only 3·5 miles in the same radius on the northern route. There is extensive open space on the southern route and none on the northern route.

If a confirming Bill is passed by both Houses, it will be a further nail in the coffin of our national parks, which are already under severe pressure from development.

Mr. Penhaligon: Will the hon. Gentleman outline the statistical evidence that he has to support his assertion that the value of land on the northern route has reduced since the introduction of milk quotas? Is that not a reflection on whether land does or does not have milk quotas attached to it? What is the statistical evidence on which he bases his assertion?

Mr. Steen: I do not have statistical evidence to hand to throw at the hon. Gentleman but I am told by reliable sources—individuals who deal with land in the area—that the introduction of milk quotas has affected the value of the land to the north of Okehampton in various parts and that land value is not nearly as great as it was five years ago. That view is expressed also by farmers in the area. I cannot provide statistical evidence at this moment but I shall gladly provide the hon. Gentleman with it in due course if that will be of assistance to him.

Mr. Neale: I am certain that my hon. Friend has no intention of misleading the House. However, he talks as if there is a southern route and a northern route and that each can be considered a clear alternative when set against the other. Will he confirm that there is no northern route of anything like equal status in terms of preparation when set against the southern route? There are 13 optional routes in the north that have been advanced and that are capable of being upgraded in preparation if my hon. Friend's arguments were to prevail.

Mr. Steen: That is a helpful intervention, and I shall try to respond to it. I understand that the 13 routes of which my hon. Friend speaks were put forward by the complainants and petitioners at the public hearing. I understand also that about 50 routes could have been put forward on that basis. None of the routes has been explored in the detail to which the southern route has been subjected. However, it is a great shame that over the past year, while the Joint Select Committee was meeting, no preparation was made for a northern route. I understand that no land or soil samples were taken to advance a northern route.

I understand that in 1976 there was a northern route and that the county council had put it into its structure plan. It is true that there have been a number of routes in the north and that preparatory work is not as far advanced as in the south. However, there are many who believe that a northern route could be advanced quickly and agreed. That could be the old route of 1976.

For all these reasons the Countryside Commission, among others, feels that the southern route should not be pursued. I am taking a stand on this issue—I have a sizeable chunk of Dartmoor in my constituency—because the policies of successive Governments, and often local governments, have been to chip away at the edges of Dartmoor and other national parks. The result is that our national parks are being eroded constantly by one-off decisions. That is well illustrated by the Meldon reservoir debacle. The reservoir is in the north-west corner of the park on the other side of the southern bypass. In 1972 the cry was, "We must have water." That was being said when my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West opened the reservoir. He claimed that it would solve all the water problems in the area. That was 13 years ago. A new reservoir is being built at Roadford to the north-west of Dartmoor. It is to be eight times the size of the Meldon reservoir. I am told that the South West water authority wants it to be 12 times larger than Meldon. Meldon reservoir is now defunct and a beautiful wild valley has been lost.

Mr. Speller: I think that my hon. Friend, being a relative newcomer to the west country, is confusing Meldon with the abortive Swincombe scheme. It was argued that the Swincombe reservoir—it is now to be the Roadford reservoir—would look after the area that I represent by providing standpipes. It ill becomes my hon. Friend to confuse Meldon, which was never a major scheme, with what was to be a scheme on the moor, which was rightly or wrongly discarded for the same reason that he discards the scheme that is set out in the Bill. It would seem that my hon. Friend is a reservoir too few.

Mr. Steen: My hon. Friend does me a disservice, which is most unlike him. I am a newcomer in terms of representing a parliamentary constituency in the west country, but I explained at the beginning of my speech—I do not know whether my hon. Friend was in his place at that time—that I have been travelling through the Dartmoor national park for about 30 years and that I know the area well.

I referred to the Meldon reservoir because I wished to quote what my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West said when he opened it in 1972. The construction was undertaken with a view to solving water problems in the area. That is an example of how the moor is being eroded constantly. I do not want to spend too much time on water provision although it is a major issue in the west country. The Meldon reservoir, however, is an example of the loss of a beautiful wild valley. Two further examples are the firing of live ammunition by the military and the extraction of china clay, which is eroding the Dartmoor national park at its edges.

I am concerned about other areas of natural beauty apart from national parks. My constituency has 60 miles of heritage coastline, thousands of acres of areas of outstanding natural beauty and many areas of great landscape value. Recent appeals to the Secretary of State against the refusal of planning consent for development in these areas have been upheld, contrary to structure plan policies and environmental and conservation interests.

Is it right for the Secretary of State for the Environment to say that we must build on vacant land, which in many instances it is right to do, in our inner cities, especially in areas of public open space, to save the green belt, and then, as a latter-day Nelson, to fail to see what is happening in our national parks, along our heritage coastline, in areas of oustanding natural beauty and in areas of landscape value?

I have dealt with the first of my list of four points. My second point turns on the fact that the boundaries that we are discussing were drawn along parish boundaries, which has been criticised by some. I shall deal with the issue shortly. It is true that the boundaries of the national park in the north were drawn along parish boundaries but that was done because they were natural boundaries formed by the river bank and the fringes of the granite outcrop. The boundaries were drawn for good reasons.

We have heard much about the support of elected local representatives for the southern route. Let us consider the voting patterns. A great deal has been made of the Okehampton town council this afternoon. It would be thought, I am sure, that that council would support unanimously the southern route, but that is not so. Instead, it voted 10 to six in favour of it. I am sure that it would be thought that the Devon county council—the transport authority, the structure plan authority and the traffic management authority—would support unanimously the southern route. On 25 July, 34 of the county councillors voted for the northern route and 38 for the southern. There were four abstentions. That can hardly be described as a unanimous vote of the local representatives. My fourth argument turns on delay, about which it is only right that the House should be concerned. If there is to be a six or eight-year delay before the completion of the northern route or the southern route, for whatever reasons, the House will be concerned about the effect that that will have on the area.

There is some dispute about how long the difference would be. There has been unusual delay in this case, and it would not be useful to explain why. However, there are differences of opinion. One opinion is that it will take at least six years longer to go north rather than south. Another view advanced by very distinguished engineers, planners and surveyors is that the northern route could take only three years longer to build. That means that the northern route would take six years to build—given that the southern route would take three—but it should not take more than six years.

An important point that has so far not been dealt with is that if the southern route goes ahead and is built in three years there will be a bottleneck three miles west of Okehampton where the track is single. I fully understand the strenuous and emotive pleas of the hon. Member for Truro on behalf of the people of Cornwall, but his timing is mistaken. If the southern route is built, instead of a jam in the middle of Okehampton, there will be one four miles further on.

The dual carriageway between Okehampton and Launceston has not yet got through its planning inquiry, and it will be four to six years before even that takes place. Therefore, if a northern route were pursued, one could have a dual carriageway from Tongue End bypassing Okehampton but going straight onto Launceston and into

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Cornwall. However, the southern route will mean another bottleneck, and the only people who will benefit—I admit that they are important—are the people of Okehampton, who will get relief four years early.

That should be understood. We are talking not about a through route to Cornwall but about shifting the traffic jam from one part of Devon to another. The hon. Member for Truro will have to wait another six to eight years before the Launceston to Okehampton section becomes dual carriageway.

By now hon. Members will have concluded that I am not in favour of the southern route, and I have given the reasons why, but I am not totally unreasonable. I have tried to obtain some improvements to the southern route should it go ahead. In July I asked the Secretary of State whether it would be possible to make the southern route less visible, less noisy and less obvious. I also tackled him about open space. I pay tribute to his response. He was quick—he got the point before I had even made it—generous and courteous to my proposals.

On visibility, there will be a huge cutting on the scarp face of East Hill, running right along the arc. Within a few minutes my right hon. Friend told me, "If we fell 1,000 trees, we must plant 70,000." I am sure that his gardening skills will be extremely handy.

As to noise, my right hon. Friend not only promised to screen the dual carriageway but talked about earth humps. What does he plan to do with these earth humps, or bumps? Where will he put them, and what will they achieve?

As for the obtrusion of the dual carriageway, I ask my right hon. Friend to consider the construction of a tunnel through East Hill, because that is where it will rise up over the Dartmoor escarpment. Officials quoted me £100 million as being the cost of 2 km, but, according to an answer in yesterday's *Hansard*, that has been revised to £160 million for 2 km. I have obtained figures for the 17 km four-lane carriageway through the Alps which, with two separate tunnels, cost £275 million. Therefore, a tunnel at East Hill will cost £80 million per km, whereas through the Alps it is £16 million per km.

Mr. Ridley: Perhaps I can explain the discrepancy between £100 million and £160 million. The £100 million was the cost of bored tunnelling—cutting through the granite—whereas the £160 million was for cut and cover. That will involve cutting a trench and covering it over later, which is why it is the more expensive of the two. There is a remarkably close correspondence between the cost comparisons of tunnelling through Dartmoor and tunnelling through the Alps. Both go through hard granite rock, which is why the work is so expensive.

Mr. Rost: My hon. Friend was referring to an answer given to me. I asked about the cost of possible partial cut and cover through the most sensitive part of East Hill. I also asked for the estimated cost of the tunnel to be built on the A1(M) motorway at Hatfield. I was told that a three-quarter mile section would cost about £14·5 million. Admittedly, that may not be a cut through granite, but it seems a large discrepancy to me.

Mr. Steen: If the 2 km at East Hill could be tunnelled, and if the 70,000 trees and earth humps did their job, we would not see the road rising up on the north face of Dartmoor. I am perplexed, because the cost will be £80 million per km through Dartmoor whereas it is only £16 million or £17 million through the Alps. In other words, it will be four times more expensive to go through Dartmoor. I wonder whether the figures are right. If it were to be £17 million per km for 2 km, would it be possible for the Department to review this decision before the matter goes to another place?

I thank the Secretary of State for all the improvements that have been offered and the concessions that have been given. Even though this route still goes through the national park, there have been improvements, and we owe the Secretary of State our greatest thanks for what he did during the summer recess.

At the end of July, after the statement was made to the House, I pointed out that it was inconceivable that the Conservative Government should be party to the seizure of open space designated for public recreation without making sure that some alternative open space was offered. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton mentioned the chairman of the Country Landowners Association in Devon, who is one of my constituents. He ferreted away day and night to persuade the landowners in that area that the future of the Bill and the southern route would to some extent depend on finding comparable open space, and, with the help of the Department's officials and the Secretary of State, the very best has been done to find it. It is fair to ask why that was done so late.

In an earlier intervention I asked the Secretary of State whether he could refund the £50,000 spent by the private national conservation organisations on petitioning the Joint Select Committee.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): Perhaps I should point out that section 7 of the 1945 Act contains provision for the award of costs to petitioners, but the Committee was not asked to exercise its power in that respect in favour of the petitioners, although it is thought that it would have been at liberty to do so. Furthermore, a prominent member of the leading petitioners—who apparently is not just speaking for herself—has written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport saying that they would have regarded an offer of money as an insult.

Mr. Steen: I welcome the Minister to the Front Bench and thank her for that timely intervention, but what one petitioner writes to her or to her right hon. Friend should not be construed as a view shared by all the petitioners, who represented 10 of the most eminent and distinguished national conservation, environmental and amenity societies.

I may not have made my point clear. The Joint Select Committee might never have met if the open space which was offered—and quite properly—by the Secretary of State a few weeks ago had been offered before the Joint Select Committee met. The Committee did not meet about the national parks; it met about open space and about the compulsory purchase orders which would have to be made if the southern route went ahead.

It was because no open space had been offered by the Government that the Joint Select Committee met. If open space had been offered, the Joint Select Committee might have decided that there was nothing to meet about, and, because the open space which was there and could have been offered was not offered until after the Joint Select

Committee made its finding in favour of the northern route, the petitioners were put to the cost of over £50,000 in putting their petitions to the Joint Select Committee.

Mr. Neale: I appreciate that my hon. Friend may be distancing himself, understandably, from the various organisations which produced the leaflet "Why a national park needs your vote", but it appears to be clear from the leaflet that, despite the fact that the Secretary of State has made offers of further land, on which my hon. Friend has congratulated him, the organisations concerned are not impressed. The signs are that they feel that the matter should be contested to the death.

Mr. Steen: My hon. Friend is entitled to that view and he is right to refer to what I thought was a well-produced leaflet. In what has turned out to be a charade, the petitioners went to the Joint Select Committee, and what the Committee said will be overturned if the Bill goes forward. We are here today only because open space was not offered at the right time. Therefore, the Government would be well advised to offer to pay the petitioners' costs. If the Government have not the power to offer cash, they could offer trees. Clearly the Secretary of State has plenty of money to buy trees. He could offer trees to the national environmental groups, which are always short of trees. Those groups should not be at a financial disadvantage because open space was offered so late.

I have made my point, and I do not think it would be right to push it further. I feel that the petitioners entered the Joint Select Committee hearing with false apprehensions. If the open space had been offered earlier, it would have helped to circumvent the whole of this debate, and would have allowed either the southern or the northern route to go forward.

I want to look now at the open space which is the subject matter of the confirming Bill. The Department has offered three sites and the House may find it of interest to know a little more about them. We have talked about open space but not about the specific sites. As many hon. Members are interested in open space and the national park, I feel that it is only right to give some of the details. One of the sites is near the old railway station at Okehampton, there is one around the medieval castle, and there is a further site at Bluebell Woods. In all, the open space amounts to 38 acres. It is true that the open space lost by the southern route is 22 acres.

An important point conveyed in the leaflet which my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) referred is that Bluebell Woods was given to the Okehampton Hamlets parish council in 1965 in the memory of Mrs. Ryan's daughter Mary, who died while a child, and that under the deed of trust it was dedicated to be preserved for ever as a place of public recreation. The open spaces are havens of peace and tranquillity.

The new open space by the station is virtually under the dual carriageway, the one near Bluebell Woods is near the new viaduct, and the one near the castle is at the bottom of the slope, at the point where vehicles on the bypass will be roaring.

Although the Secretary of State has clearly looked, with the chairman of the Devon country landowners, for every possible solution, I think that to picnic at the open spaces that are being offered would probably be like picnicking in the middle of Trafalgar square.

I am impressed by the fact that the Okehampton town council has offered to maintain and sustain the open spaces if and when the Government give them to the nation. However, it should be recognised that the open space which will be given to the nation will be declared to be for the use of posterity.

There is one further possibility about which I invite the Secretary of State to say something, either now or in the reply to the debate. There are 1,400 acres of land which could be included in the national park. It was mentioned by the Secretary of State in his opening speech when he said that the Department of Transport's decision on the Exeter-Okehampton road had circumnavigated the national park near Sticklepath. The re-routeing of that section of the A30 outside the national park has opened up the possibility of adding two further pieces to the national park. I recognise that it is a matter for the Countryside Commission, but that addition would be convenient, because the A30 would then encapsulate not only the present piece of the national park but the two other pieces on either side, making another 1,400 acres.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Transport will recommend to the Secretary of State for the Environment and his colleagues that it would be an appropriate measure for the Countryside Commission to consider, and welcome the possibility of a further 1,400 acres being included in the national park, which has been made possible only by his circumnavigating of the park.

National parks are special, and many of them are fraying at the edges. Dartmoor is rapidly coming to resemble a moth-eaten carpet. If Okehampton is to be given the alternative of a northern route, I believe that there is a reasonable northern route. If the House rejects the southern route today, and the other place also rejects it, I do not believe that it will be open to the inspector in future to say that he will go south of Okehampton. He will have to go north of Okehampton, and that will fit in, in a timely way, with the dual carriageway from Okehampton to Launceston.

If the Bill is confirmed, Dartmoor will shrink. The noise pollution will affect the whole of the Okehampton valley for nearly six miles. If the wind is from the north, I believe that it will affect the deep north.

The saga of the Okehampton bypass has captured the imagination of the nation. The threat to the national park has attracted widespread concern. Although I understand that the Secretary of State felt obliged to bring the Bill to the House, we should not allow it to make any progress. By voting against it we can ensure the integrity of all national parks. I have no doubt that in the years to come the debate will be regarded as a watershed in terms of saving our heritage as against short-term expediency.

6.30 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey: I begin with two short tributes. The first is to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). I congratulate him on his first appearance in his new post. His move from agriculture to transport is a little ironic. I wonder whether, in his previous responsibilities, he could so cogently have put the case that he has presented today. He is welcome to the Opposition Front Bench, not only because of his expertise in the House, but because he is much respected for his other activities outside the House, in particular for his connection with the anti-apartheid movement.

My second tribute is to an absent friend who has been referred to by many hon. Members—the hon. Member

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for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) in whose constituency Okehampton lies. We all miss him, and wish him a full and speedy recovery. He is particularly missed this week, because he has the much respected function in the House of being the chairman of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship, which this week is holding its first ever national prayer breakfast. The hon. Gentleman will be unable to be with us for that breakfast. He much regrets that he will be absent, as he regrets his absence today. We send the hon. Member and his family our good wishes for a speedy recovery.

My third tribute is to my temporarily absent colleague, the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). I shall take a different line from him, and I do so with trepidation. Not only has he been a Member of Parliament for longer than I have, but he is the president of my party. Despite his words and, unusually, his graphics, I am happy to say that I do not think that the balance of the argument lies entirely in his favour. When the votes are cast—I see that my hon. Friend is returning to the Chamber just as I am about to foretell our fate—I think he will discover that more of his hon. Friends are against him than are for him. But that remains to be seen.

Lastly, it may appear to be somewhat anomalous and odd that an hon. Member who represents about the most urban consituency should be speaking on this issue.—[HON. MEMBERS: "Typical."] Hon. Members say, "Typical," but I can assure them, if they do not know it already, that by upbringing I am a country lad, even though by adoption I am a city dweller. I have enjoyed the pleasures and suffered the troubles of Okehampton and Dartmoor. For many years I have had clearly in my mind a vision of the moor as seen from Okehampton: either while stationary, which is the cause of the problem, or while on the move.

Mr. Neale: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would be kind enough to give a further explanation of his opinion, in view of the declared support for the Bill by his hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). Is the hon. Gentleman speaking for himself, or is he speaking as the spokesman for the Liberal party? He is aware, I am sure, that there is strong, unequivocal Liberal support in Cornwall for this measure. It would be considered by them to be a grave disloyalty if he were to try to persuade his party to oppose the hon. Member for Truro.

Mr. Hughes: I shall willingly answer the hon. Gentleman's question. There will be no party-line on this vote. We do not call it a free vote, because we believe that all votes should be free. We are sad only that the Government have not allowed their Members to have a free vote, or a no-party-line vote. We understand that the Whips are on, even though with only two stars, as opposed to three. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I do not speak as the spokesman or as the representative of the Liberal party. We shall speak and vote as individuals, and we shall put our cases from our different points of view. This is one of those debates in which strong and honest views are held on both sides of the argument and in which one seeks to weigh the evidence, balance it according to one's experience and come to a proper view.

One argument is that this is about the national interest. That is defined as upholding the national parks principle and ensuring that there are no intrusions into them. This argument has to be set against the argument about the local interest—the economy of the south-west of England. However, there is another dilemma with which the House and Government institutions are faced—the difference between gain and loss. Is the gain to the people who seek to bypass Okehampton and to the people of Okehampton greater than the loss that will be suffered by the loss of amenity if part of the national park is lost? Is that loss sufficient to justify the bypass being built a little more quickly than the northern route, which I favour? *[Interruption.]* I heard somebody say, "No." The Secretary of State is sensitive to the fact that there will be a delay. It is his most sensitive spot. It is the Government's Achilles heel. There are other arguments which are not so strong as the Secretary of State would have us believe, but I shall deal with them later.

I am surprised that reference has not been made to the fact that it was not until the mid-1970s, although the debate has been raging since the early 1960s, that the balance of local interest and the predominant view moved in favour of the southern route. Until then, the northern route had been favoured. An interesting point was made earlier by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), that if there had to be another inquiry because Parliament voted against the Bill, and the inspector's conclusion in favour of the southern route had therefore to be rejected, it would result in a heyday for the lawyers. However, it has to be borne in mind that it was only when the farming interest predominated, although not entirely, that the lawyers who spoke for them came into the picture. Only then, because of the agricultural land that would have been lost, did the balance tilt in favour of the southern route. The argument has not always therefore been one way. The tide has turned. Only in the last few years has opinion favoured the route which the Government now endorse.

Mr. Speller: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that my constituents, who live within three miles of Okehampton, say, "A plague on both your houses. We do not care which way the inquiry goes, but for goodness sake, do something."? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a free vote would lead to procrastination and vastly increased expense for the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) and my own?

Mr. Hughes: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point that Okehampton needs a bypass. The anomaly and the tragedy are that it could have been built more than 10 years ago, when it was felt that it should be built on the northern side of Okehampton. It was not a failure of the planning system which meant that it could not be implemented. The failure arose from the consensus view not being implemented. Had that plan been put into effect the delays would have been obviated. The national park would have been preserved, the inconvenience would have mitigated and unemployment in the south-west would, I hope, have been reduced. It is sad that it has taken the nation so long to get to grips with this problem.

Mr. Penhaligon: I do not know what the position was in the early 1960s. I was 18, and my hon. Friend was even younger. Will he take it from me that there are eight farmers who serve on the Okehampton town council, that four of them farm to the south of Okehampton and that four of them farm to the north of Okehampton? Their collective view was seven to one in favour of the southern route.

Mr. Hughes: I do not dissent from that. The problem with which the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon), who had experience as Secretary of State for the Environment in the 1970s, did not grapple is that, according to a Government circular of 1976, the key test is that if a road is to be built through a national park, no reasonable alternative should be available. The conclusion of the public inquiry and of the Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament, chaired by the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), was that there was a reasonable alternative. Lawyers argue more than most about what is meant by "reasonable", but nobody has dissented from that proposition. By pressing ahead with this route, the Government are ignoring the cumulative wisdom of the ages, including that of their predecessors—that national parks should not be intruded upon unless there is no reasonable alternative.

Mr. Neale: In paragraph 28.18 of the report, the inspector said:

"In all these circumstances, my view is that none of the northern routes that were considered at the Inquiry is a reasonable alternative for the purpose of Circular 4/76."

The hon. Gentleman is right about the Joint Committee, but he is wrong about the public inspector's decision.

Mr. Hughes: I did not mean to give the impression that the inspector was saying that in his view there was a reasonable alternative, which he then discounted. I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept that the argument that one can conclude only that there is no reasonable alternative —which is the test of the Government's policy, and which has now been established for nine years—has been put by many bodies, not least the Countryside Commission.

The Countryside Commission has repeatedly considered the relative merits of the land in question. Its statement says:

"The Commission has confirmed that the area which would be affected by the southern route is of national park quality. The landscape which would be affected by the northern route is not of national significance nor is it comparable in quality of that south of the town within the national park."

It is important to weigh that up. The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) has pointed out that many environmentally and ecologically important elements in the land will be lost. Once lost, the land will be lost for ever. If a similar threat were posed to, for example, the Cornish coastline, I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Truro would be equally willing to see it disappear. I doubt it.

On the other side of the scale is the agricultural land. It is not prime quality agricultural land. There is a drainage problem. Its value depends on surpluses and payments under the quota system. The argument that we need to conserve every bit of non-prime dairy land, when we clearly over-produce—we are trying to deal with this problem—does not ring true.

There is the argument about the relative scenic advantages and disadvantages. Weighed in the balance, the argument points in favour of the northern rather than the southern route. There is the argument also about the effects on traffic into and out of the national park. Many experts believe that the inflow and outflow of traffic are not crucial determining factors. It has been argued that good roads automatically bring jobs. The Department of Transport said that that was not a proper conclusion. Its 1977 advisory committee said:

"since most of the problems of depressed areas can be traced to non-transport factors, improved communications may do more harm than good".

There are not many jobs available in some of the areas with the most roads—for example, north-west England and Strathclyde in Scotland. One can just as quickly leave an area and take employment from it as move into an area and bring in employment.

Perhaps the crucial issue is delay. Recently, there has been correspondence in the columns of *The Times* between Mr. Parker and the Minister of State. Mr. Parker's inquiry was checked by engineers from a firm in my constituency — Denis Wilson and Partners — and it has been confirmed that the differential delay will be two or three years. It is not a matter of getting rid of any further inquiry or of ignoring the rights of people to protest. Most of the evidence has been accumulated.

We must ask: should we forfeit two or three years of delay—given that we have delayed so long—to obtain the benefits needed by Okehampton and the south-west, or should we forfeit for ever an incursion into our national park? Those who believe that our countryside and environment are important say that the principle is sufficiently important to be held sacrosanct by Parliament. We are afraid that, if we breach that principle once, we can breach it again more easily. I defy anyone to say that the argument would not be used to that effect in the future.

6.45 pm

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): It takes courage for a Derbyshire Member to enter this heated fray. I hesitate to intervene, especially as so many of my colleagues from the west country are anxious to have the vote as quickly as possible so that we can proceed with the bypass. I feel that I should explain why, although I want the bypass to be built as quickly as do my colleagues—it should have been constructed many years ago—I cannot support the Government and must vote against the Bill.

It was perhaps my misfortune but also my great honour to chair the Joint Committee. The House should have the opportunity to hear the Committee's view. No Committee Member has yet had an opportunity to participate. I would not present myself as a representative of that Committee, but I should point out that its view has been misrepresented and denigrated. To some extent, attempts have been made to discredit the Committee. Those moves were unjustified. Hon. Members served on the Committee conscientiously and impartially and approached their work in a completely uncommitted way.

The Committee had very narrowly defined terms of reference. Some hon. Members have suggested that we defined those terms far too widely, but the narrow terms resulted from the right of petitioners to petition a special Committee on the grounds that open space was being taken away without adequate alternative open space being offered. At first, the Committee thought that it could accept the petition on those narrow grounds and not become involved in re-arguing the public inquiry. We sought the best available advice from the House of Lords Procedure Committee. It was clear that we would be doing an injustice to the petitioners if we defined the terms of reference in such a narrow way as to look only at the open space aspect without considering why the route should not go through Dartmoor and considering whether there was

[Mr. Peter Rost]

a reasonable alternative route. We noted the petition, but tried to insist that only new evidence that had not come to light during the long public inquiry was relevant.

An interesting point which I do not think the House has understood is that a great deal of new evidence was presented to the Joint Committee. The inspector openly admitted in 1979 that he had made a finely balanced decision. He made his decision as he thought right at that time, but he might well have made a decision the other way if he had heard some of the evidence presented to the Joint Committee. I do not believe that that point has been brought out. Anyone who goes through the evidence—I do not recommend it because it would be a long task and it would involve as many sleepless nights as we had—given during the Select Committee's 90-odd hours of hearings might come to the same conclusion.

The Joint Committee's case has been misrepresented. Its terms of reference were, in the view of its members, to decide whether we should allow the compulsory purchase to go ahead, as the inspector had recommended, or whether there was any new evidence which might lead us to a different conclusion—in other words, that the route need not go through Dartmoor because there was a reasonable alternative. We came to the conclusion that the fact that there was no reasonable alternative was not proved. My hon. Friends have referred to some of the evidence—for example, that it need take no more than two or three years for the alternative road to be built rather than the five to six years, as the Department claims.

We are all aware that our beloved civil servants and bureaucrats have ways and means of arguing their case strongly when it suits them. I hope that no one would be so hypocritical as to deny that. Once someone is committed to a line of action, it is far easier to pursue that decision rather than to admit that there may be a second opinion and justification for a re-think. I believe that that is what has happened here.

Originally, a route to the north was recommended. That was the position until about 1974, when the prospect of the railway line being available for the southern route suddenly emerged. At that point, the landscape advisory committee said, "Aha, here is the ideal route. We can put the road along the railway line being abandoned by British Rail. No one will see it or know that it is there. I will make an ideal cutting." That suddenly became the ideal preferred route.

Mr. Neale: My hon. Friend has said that the civil servants and bureaucrats, as he described them, exaggerated the time element to make the Minister's case. Does he accept that the same argument could have been put 15 years ago when the southern route was first advanced? They could have suggested to Ministers that it would only take three years to approve the southern route. Knowing what has happened in the south, and how tremendously well educated people in the north have become as a result of the actions of the protesters in the south, does my hon. Friend imagine that anyone would want to under-estimate the time that the northern route would take to go through its various proceedings?

Mr. Rost: I accept that my hon. Friend has a good point. I will not keep him too long from putting his point of view. I am aware that my hon. Friends feel passionately about this matter. I dare say that I might have had a different view if I were a west country Member and realised the damage that the delay was doing to my constituency and its economy.

My hon. Friends must understand that those of us who served on the Joint Committee approached the matter impartially and from a non-constituency point of view. We had to decide whether the evidence given to us warranted a decision. We had to come to a conclusion, from the evidence and the narrow terms of reference, on whether there was a reasonable alternative route.

The road going through the park along the railway line became the preferred route. The preparatory work went towards that route. Suddenly British Rail changed its mind. It did not want the railway line to be closed. It wanted to continue it for the quarry. It became obvious that that route was no longer available. Instead of the landscape advisory committee saying that Dartmoor no longer seemed a likely route, that vast environmental opposition was building up and therefore reconsidering the original route in the north to see whether it could be put into shape, we were committed to one route. All the arguments were deployed in favour of stubbornly persisting with that route, although it was clear that it would take far longer to push it through because of the environmental opposition that was building up and the inevitable keenly fought public inquiry that would result.

It is unfair that some of us on that Joint Committee who were responsible for ruling against the inspector are in some way being blamed for the delay. It is as if we were trying to add to the inconvenience and economic hardship that is resulting from the failure long ago to build that bypass. That is grossly unfair. The implication is that two wrongs should make a right. Because a mistake was made in the past by continuing to persist with the southern route, it has now become so late and the matter has become so urgent that the quickest route to build must be accepted regardless of the principles and the arguments. That is what we are being asked to accept tonight.

Unfortunately, a Select Committee, especially one set up under that rather special judicial procedure, was unable to consider that point. We had to weigh the merits of the case, not whether to accept the quickest route to build. Going back to circular 4/76, we had to consider whether the case that there was no reasonable alternative had been made out. Unfortunately, the evidence presented to us made it clear that there was a reasonable alternative. It was a little longer. It would take a little more farming land. It would cost a little more, but it would not damage the environment as much as the Dartmoor route. The inspector confirmed that point.

Mr. Steen: Is it not right to say that, if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had offered the public open space to the nation before my hon. Friend's Committee was established, my right hon. Friend could be building the route now? Does my hon. Friend agree that by not offering the open space for a year my right hon. Friend has prolonged the case? I should be grateful if my hon. Friend would say whether he feels that the petitioners should bear the cost merely because my right hon. Friend offered the open space as late as he did?

Mr. Rost: I was interested in my hon. Friend's speech, which I enjoyed. He put forward a forceful argument that we might not have been in this position tonight and might not have had the special Committee procedure if the open

space had been offered and if the Committee had considered it and decided that there was no case for the petition. If that had happened, we could now be nine months further on with the road, but that would not necessarily have led to justice. We welcomed the opportunity, which we did not ask for but which was nevertheless thrust upon us, to consider the new evidence that the petitioners claimed that they had. We did that.

I spent many sleepness nights going through the evidence of the 96-day public inquiry. Some of it was absolutely fascinating and some of it was a bit dreary. Nevertheless, it was an important exercise. What struck me most about that public inquiry—I accept it is a subjective judgment—was that the final decision, which came out three years after the inquiry finished, because the inspector, unfortunately, suffered from ill health, was made by one man and was a finely balanced one. He took pages and pages of summary to weigh up the pros and cons, saying it was a bit more this and a bit more that. When he had weighed them up, he did not come to a clear-cut decision, because if one reads the final conclusions of that report one sees that the judgment was by no means unanimous and clear cut. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will agree with that.

The decision was finely balanced and could equally well have gone the other way. Anyone who listened at the Joint Committee hearings would also have come to the conclusion that the Joint Committee faced a finely balanced judgment. There were only six members on the Committee and we came to a subjective conclusion. The difference is that we came to a conclusion based on the evidence presented to us and the case made by the Department, and on balance the case of the petitioners stood and there was a reasonable alternative. It might not be the best and most desirable alternative, and of course it will take two to three years longer. It will be a little more costly and will take a little more farm land. There were also other inconveniences, but in our judgment, those factors did not make it an unreasonable alternative route.

I should like to refer to Lord Sandford's report and circular 4/76, paragraph 58, which we had to take as our terms of reference. When we looked at the inspector's report, we took the view that, although he also took circular 4/76 into account, it had been issued only a few months previously and did not weigh as heavily during the inspector's deliberations as it would have done subsequently when the circular was accepted more widely as a basis for policy decision-taking. Let us remind ourselves of what the Joint Committee and the inspector were asked to decide. Paragraph 58 of circular 4/76 says:

"it is now the policy of the Government that investment in trunk roads should be directed to developing routes for long distance traffic which avoid national parks, and that no new route for long distance traffic should be constructed through a national park, or existing road upgraded unless it has been demonstrated that there is a compelling need which would not be met by any reasonable alternative means."

That was our dilemma, and it was the inspector's dilemma. It is grossly unfair for the deliberations of our Joint Committee to be in some way abused as if we were not experts, as if we did not take the matter seriously, as if we had only 90 hours instead of 90 days' deliberation, and as if we sat at Westminster instead of Okehampton. All sorts of insinuations were made. Many of my hon. Friends sit on Select Committees that produce important reports. How would they feel if their reports were denigrated, making it look as if they were being accused of not having done a conscientious job?

We all know that Select Committee reports are often ignored by Government, by officials and by policy makers. We also know that they are often influential in getting changes of direction and changes of policy. The implication that our Joint Committee was less important than the public inquiry is quite unacceptable. They were different forums with completely different procedures. The Joint Committee was more like a court of appeal than an ordinary Select Committee. We could not choose whom to call in evidence. We had the petitioners and the defence, two sides. First one side presented its case and its witnesses, then the other side presented its case and its witnesses, just as in a court of law. We then had to rule.

We were able to intervene as a judge can intervene, to ask questions, but for the most part counsel were responsible for prompting the witnesses to say, what they wanted them to say, and we had to sit and listen. When we weighed up the pros and cons, we came to the independent judgment that there was no reason why an alternative route should not be developed. Having reached that conclusion, we were still faced with the terrible dilemma which now faces hon. Members.

Some of us may have a conscience as to what extent this affects the wider issues of national policy on the environment, open space and national parks. Against that, however, we have to face the fact that the Government and my hon. Friends from the west country have, quite rightly, reached such a point of frustration with the 20-year delay that they do not care which route the road takes so long as the road can be built quickly.

I know from my own soundings and the Committee's work that that is the majority view of local people as well, and that is inevitably why most local authorities in the area support the Dartmoor route. They know that it will come two or three years sooner. We have to weigh that factor against our conscience, because there is a matter of principle here. Has there been an error of judgment? The inspector went marginally one way and the Joint Committee went marginally the other way, its decision being based on fresh evidence.

In addition to a marginal error of judgment, there is a matter of principle here. Do we condone and endorse that error and assume that two wrongs will make a right, or do we take the easier option and go for the route which will be built more quickly? I have thought carefully about this matter over many weeks, and particularly just before this vote tonight, and I have no doubt that in years to come the fact that one road would take two to three years longer to build than the other will be forgotten. I am not saying it will not cause a great deal of inconvenience over the years until it is built, but in the long run I will be able to rest in peace and my conscience will be clear, because I will have voted for the principle that the route to the north is environmentally the best, and will preserve the principle of our own policy towards open space.

My decision will also correct an error made some years ago. We are being asked to take the easy option to correct that error by going through the park when we ought to go the other way. For that reason, I will vote against the Bill.

7.10 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I congratulate the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), first, on the case

[Mr. Michael Foot]

that he has put to the House, and secondly, on the way in which he presided over the Committee. I do not want to do him any damage with his hon. Friends, but those who have heard him today or who have read the report will realise with what devotion and skill he presided over the Committee. He was determined to carry out his duties under the provisions of the constitutional and parliamentary arrangements. I, on behalf of many, thank him for the work that he has done and for the way that he has presented the case today.

The Minister referred to the constitutional aspects. As he said, in the last resort this House must be prepared to exercise its right to decide what is to happen. It can override Committees, Joint Committees and anybody else, and in some cases it has a duty to do so. It is under that procedure that we operate today. However, the Minister must acknowledge that it is rare to call upon that form of procedure, because it is rare for Ministers to seek to override the view of a Joint Committee asked to report on a certain matter.

The hon. Member for Erewash underlined another matter of great importance, not only to this debate but to the future protection of our heritage—that very often Joint Committees are much wiser than inspectors. We should not think that inspectors always reach the right conclusions. Indeed, as the hon. Gentleman said, the inspector's decision made many years ago was a matter of balance. He admitted under cross-examination that, had other facts been available at the time, he might have reached a different conclusion.

I hope that the House will support the Joint Committee report, which has been brought before it under such exceptional procedure. I have listened to every word spoken in the debate, and I still believe that the case of the hon. Member for Erewash and his Joint Committee is a great deal stronger than the Government's case.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) on the way in which he put the Opposition's case. We all understand the enormous pressure from Cornwall, Devon and other areas to get the matter settled. They say, "A plague on all further delays." No one could have put that aspect of the case more eloquently than the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). He put his case well, although he rather overstated it. By the end of his speech, he would have had us believe that no injury at all would be done to Dartmoor. Those of us who know Dartmoor as well as the hon. Gentleman knows Cornwall take a different view. It was an error to try to overstate his case, because no one denies that his case has merit.

We all agree that there must be some sort of bypass and that it must be constructed as soon as possible. Whatever decision is made today, the construction must be hastened. I do not accept the Secretary of State's comments about the time involved in an alternative route. If we decide to throw out the Government's proposal and choose an alternative, I am sure that the speed with which it could be implemented would be far greater than that suggested in the right hon. Gentleman's speech. Of course, we cannot cut out all the delays, but they will not be as long as he tried to suggest.

Because Ministers have said that long delays are inevitable if an alternative route is chosen, many people in Okehampton and Cornwall have been persuaded to support the case presented by the hon. Member for Truro. That case is not good enough. The hon. Gentleman argued about jobs, and I understand his passionate desire to do everything possible to protect existing jobs and to attract fresh jobs to Cornwall. Everyone wants the bypass constructed as soon as possible.

However, many interests must be weighed. Some of those interests have, to a degree, been protected by those who oppose the Government's scheme. I give the hon. Members for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and for Erewash full credit for having gained something by their objections. If the southern route goes ahead, it will be a better route because of the arguments and objections than had they never been presented. Anyone who thinks that the national parks would have been protected without such a campaign has a strange understanding of how the House operates.

When I heard the Secretary of State misquote the debates in 1945 and 1946, I felt that it was all the more necessary to put on record the views of all hon. Members. Had the Government's proposal gone through the House in the easy way that the Secretary of State wanted—with the House accepting that it was 100 per cent. right, with nothing to be said against it—the next time that someone wanted to carve a piece out of a national park this precedent would be quoted.

Since the national parks were established, hon. Members on both sides of the House have wanted to protect them. The Labour party takes special pride in the part that it played after 1945 in extending the operation of the national parks and kindred operations. The Labour party took a leading role at a critical moment in our history. It has always been interested in protecting our heritage. If that had not been the case, the invasion of our heritage would have been even greater.

It was right that a Joint Committee of the House should be charged with determining whether there was a reasonable alternative to the proposed route, and that is the question that it examined with such care. The hon. Member for Erewash has every right to throw back in the faces of those who make them any aspersions against the way in which the Joint Committee applied its understanding to the problem. It produced an answer, and it is no good the House just pushing that to one side simply because it is different from the Minister's answer.

It may be that a Joint Committee considers the matter more objectively than Ministers or inspectors. Therefore, the House must take account of the fact that a Joint Committee set up by the House has examined the matter in great detail and decided that there is a reasonable alternative to the Government's proposal. The Labour party believes that the House should vote for the reasonable alternative. Indeed, many of us have argued over the months and years that we should adopt a reasonable alternative.

People in different areas have differing views on the matter. The societies and residents of Okehampton have voted against the northern route. All who have read their views will agree that they have put a very reasonable case and no hon. Member can deny them the right to put their case. Strong elements in Devon, Cornwall and throughout the country recognise the powerful conclusion arrived at by the Joint Select Committee. The House must take account of the individual's case as well as listening to the powerful arguments of those who say that we must speed ahead in every possible way to procure the bypass.

However, other arguments must be borne in mind by the people of Cornwall, Devon and the rest of the country. I speak as one who has Devon blood as well as Cornish blood in his veins. That is another reason why I am participating in the debate. No two counties owe more to the protection provided by the national parks and the National Trust or rely more on those institutions being safeguarded by the House. The affairs of Devon and Cornwall may not primarily be involved with tourism but tourism plays as great a part in the livelihood and life of Cornwall as it does in the traffic jams of Okehampton. It is nonsense for anyone to suggest that the House should treat trivially the question of how national parks or the National Trust should be affected. That point was made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who was the Liberal dissenter on this occasion —although I understand he may be in the majority on the Liberal Benches at the end. The hon. Member for Truro expressed the majority view in the Liberal party when he stated eloquently what his reactions would be if a proposition were made to carve away even a small slice of some of the beautiul parts of the National Trust in his own and neighbouring Cornish constituencies.

If a fight arises on one of those matters and the hon. Member for Truro faces a barbarian Ministry of Transport, I can promise him my support just as I would support hon. Members and others who say that the most essential aspect of this debate is the need to protect the national parks against any form of depredation, especially when procedures have been followed and the House has been presented with an authoritative view that there is a reasonable alternative to the desecration that would occur if the proposal were carried through.

7.24 pm

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): It is always a great pleasure to listen to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). I listened to some of the right hon. Gentleman's speeches which were recorded and broadcast on the radio before I came to the House and I admired his contributions to various debates. I am aware of the right hon. Gentleman's blood relations and know of his brother's close interest in this matter, which Lord Foot will no doubt pursue with equal eloquence in another place.

I find rather curious one or two points arising from the right hon. Gentleman's speech. I noted with interest that it was the Labour Government, when the right hon. Gentleman was in the Cabinet, who first announced a preferred route to the south and set in train the whole process that we are now conducting. Bearing in mind the right hon. Gentleman's unashamed espousal of human rights and individual rights over many years, it is interesting to note that he, too, was apparently persuaded by the suggestion that if we reverted to the northern route it would be possible to accelerate the process in a way that would trample the rights and property interests of people on the north side of the town.

My hon. Friend the Chairman of the Joint Committee accepted the point that I made in an intervention about the amount of experience that people in the Okehampton area now have of the various types of procrastination on these matters but expressed somewhat sensitively his annoyance at the reaction of some of his colleagues which was thrown back at the Committee and at him and which he regarded as grossly unfair.

The point was ably dealt with by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon). There was the clearest understanding among all the various interests in the west country that the Joint Committee would consider only questions of open space and would not investigate in depth the north-south question. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) also touched on this and would no doubt agree that it would have been far more comprehensible if, having decided that it was genuinely dissatisfied with the amount of land offered in exchange, the Committee had made it clear that for that reason it could not recommend the orders. It need not have gone further. As the hon. Member for Truro pointed out, we were all surprised when it then went to the length of considering the north-south question.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton also criticised the Government and, presumably, the Labour Government for proceeding on just one preferred route and providing less evidence in connection with the alternative. In my view, however, that is a well-tried precedent and it behoves Governments to keep to it, because the cost of preparing detailed plans for two or three alternative routes would be prohibitive and would blight a large number of properties in a way which would subsequently prove to be unjustified.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) is not present, but I am sure that he will be delighted when he reads the comments that have been made about him. He has asked me to make certain constituency points for him and I hope that the House will tolerate my doing so on his behalf.

First, my hon. Friend wishes to thank especially our right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment for visiting the area and acquiring personal knowledge of it. That has not only reassured my hon. Friend but has done much to reassure local people, whatever their opinions, that in the decisions being made, Ministers are fully aware of the location, the route and the alternatives. My hon. Friend will be similarly delighted at the number of colleagues on both sides of the House who have visited the area to acquaint themselves with the nature of the problem.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that my hon. Friend feels very sad in connection with two matters. One of them accounts for his absence today. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton will confirm, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West was elected in 1964 and almost immediately the Okehampton bypass changed from a fantasy—a line drawn on a map to show that there ought to be a bypass—into something meaningful.

It appeared for the first time in the county development plan in 1965, when it was talked about as a route around Okehampton. In 1968 the route was placed in the programme to be considered more seriously. I do not think my hon. Friends and Opposition Members are aware that as early as 1969 the advisory committee on the landscape treatment of trunk roads, which was established under successive Governments and includes people appointed by the Secretary of State for the time being, including all manner of experts on planning and highway design, and representing every conceivable interest, considered the matter for the first time so as to advise the Labour Government on the route the road should take.

That committee reported in July 1969 to a Labour Government, to a Conservative Government in January

[Mr. Gerrard Neale]

1972, April 1972 and June 1972, and to a Labour Government in April 1974 and again in November 1975. On each and every occasion the committee not only reviewed the decision but visited Okehampton. On each occasion the committee came back to the same conclusion —that, although it had to be accepted that there would be environmental damage whether the route went north or south, in its view there would be less environmental damage if it went south of the town.

In 1975, under a Labour Government, my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West had reason to feel that the chances were that the route would go south of the town, but obviously it was still for the Government to decide. The Sandford report, which has often been referred to in the Chamber by various Members, was also considered in the sixth review of the landscape advisory committee. The committee commented on that report. Then we had the decision of the Labour Government in favour of the southern route.

I cannot see how anyone could dispute that, in announcing the southern route decision eight months after circular 4/76, the Government must have taken note of the wording of that circular. They must have accepted the evidence which had come to them and realised that it was in order, within the context of the condition in that circular that the route should go to the south. Nevertheless, they intimated that the northern alternative would be considered. I have checked with my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West. Whether one asks him now or had asked him at the time when the southern route was first announced as the preferred route, there is no doubt in his mind that the majority of people in and around Okehampton favoured the route to the south.

When we were returned as the Government in 1979, it was close to the time that the public inquiry was to be set in motion. Presumably the Secretary of State saw no reason to change the decision which had been made about the southern route, and we went into the 96-day public inquiry. Every conceivable issue was raised in that public inquiry. It was one of the longest public inquiries there has ever been about a new road. As has been stated several times, on 58 of those days the environmental factors of the southern route were discussed. The matter could not have been better reviewed and investigated.

We know that there were problems later because of the illness of the inspector but, as I made clear in an intervention, he said in his report:

> "In all these circumstances, my view is that none of the northern routes that were considered at the Inquiry is a reasonable alternative for the purposes of Circular 4/76."

Surely any Government that followed upon another that selected the southern route as the preferred route, that followed upon six separate visits and reports by the landscape advisory committee and that followed upon a 96-day public inquiry are entitled to say that the southern route should be the preferred route. There would have been absolute astonishment in the west country if the Conservative Government had departed from that view.

Mr. Best: Does not my hon. Friend accept that everything seems to hinge on the word "reasonable"? Is that an objective or a subjective criterion? Can he understand that it is conceivable that one man might regard the southern route as reasonable, as the inspector did, and another man might regard something else as reasonable, as we did in the Joint Committee?

Mr. Neale: That is a reasonable comment. As the hon. Member for Truro said, many of us were not aware of the way in which the Joint Committee would consider its evidence. My hon. Friend is entitled, as were all the members of that Committee, to arrive at a conclusion. I dispute his conclusion, but I do not dispute his entitlement as a Member of the House to arrive at a conclusion. The one inescapable point is that a decision has to be made.

In 1976, the Labour Government were faced with a fearful dilemma. There was beautiful country on either side of Okehampton and a preferred route had to be announced. They faced the decision and went for the southern route. I take issue with my hon. Friend because the route has been considered by the landscape advisory committee and has come under the charge of several Secretaries of State and Ministers of State for Transport as well as Environment. A range of people have played a part in the consistency of the decision.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West would no doubt consider it a second sad aspect of the matter that Parliament has become embroiled in it, bearing in mind that it is of such local importance. He has campaigned for it ever since he was elected. Everyone bar the ignorant accepts the need for the bypass. We have heard that approximately 1,300 lorries a day go though Okehampton. The hon. Member for Truro will confirm that there are 260,000 visitors a year, 90 per cent. of whom travel by car into Cornwall and many of whom go through Okehampton on a road that is only 17 ft wide in places and which has very steep gradients. Lorries and other slow-moving vehicles must inevitably cut their speed to 2 to 3 mph, causing enormous traffic jams.

There has been reference to the police providing tea just outside Okehampton. One may jest about their generosity, but we must remember that, because of the nature of the road, the police have to expend manpower on conducting about 500 wide vehicles a year along that stretch. It is inevitable that at busy weekends they must devote police time, money, vehicles and manpower to this inordinate build-up of traffic. Tremendous pressures are placed on the emergency services. The bypass would obviate that.

Speaking for my constituency and on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West, I must point out that there was considerable disbelief in the west country at the fact that this matter should have been referred to a Committee at all. After all, it had gone through all the processes that I described. The delay over the inspector's illness was bad enough, although that could not be avoided, but the people could not understand that even further delay should arise. Thus, reference to the Committee met with complete disbelief.

When the Committee began to hear the protesters' allegations, the nature of the argument could not be comprehended. There was talk of the Dartmoor route going through the national park and of the park being "carved up". In fact, half the bypass round the town of Okehampton would be a mere 60 yd within the boundary of the national park and the other half at no point would be more than 1,000 yd inside it. Perhaps the hon. Member for Truro set a new trend in the Chamber by producing

, visual aids. He showed on a map the area, 365 square miles, of national park. We are talking about 2,330 acres and a mere 0·06 per cent. of the park. It is minimal.

There has been much talk of open space as if this route would invade a large area of publicly owned land and that what is proposed would be a national disaster. Only two acres on the southern route is not in private ownership. Indeed, one area that is in private ownership and is deemed to be open space represents the land for which the Secretary of State has offered replacement land. Only two acres, graphically called Bluebell Woods or Meldon Woods, are privately owned.

We have heard about the basis on which the local council owns the land. The council members are delighted with what the Government have offered. Well before the latest exchange proposal was made they were greatly in favour of the scheme, and when I met them some months ago they said that they would have transferred the land without the necessity for a compulsory purchase order. The hon. Member for Truro said that the farm-owning community on the parish council were seven to one in favour of the southern route.

Whatever my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) has done to try to defend himself—I do not mean that disparagingly — and the members of this Committee, there was derision in the west country about the way in which the Committee examined the matter. I must admit that, for it would be wrong of me to do otherwise.

Mr. Rost: I am sure that my hon. Friend did not intend to phrase what he said in the rather unfortunate way in which he said it, and I will not make anything of that. Will he accept that if, in a democracy, there is a procedure which gives an appellant a right of appeal in a court of law, and if the same right of appeal, through some strange but nevertheless entirely democratic procedure, allows petitioners to appeal, they should be entitled to do so, and that the procedures in this case were perfectly in order?

Mr. Neale: I do not dispute that. I repeat—I say this not by way of personal comment—that the fact that the Committee was meeting to consider the issue in this fashion caused derision among people, certainly in Cornwall, and that feeling was strongly held.

Mr. Steen: My hon. Friend suggested that there was some criticism of the Joint Committee for meeting at all. The Committee met as the result of a procedure by which the petitioners were able to petition. Surely there is no criticism that the Committee met or of the fact that it reached a decision. My hon. Friend may not like the decision, but I hope he will agree that the Committee was entitled to reach it.

Mr. Neale: The Committee was entitled to reach a decision and I dispute any suggestion that there was criticism of it having reached one, although there was criticism of the decision. I wish to make it abundantly clear that there was disbelief at the Committee's establishment in the first place and derision about the way in which it reconsidered what many people in Cornwall in particular considered to have been gone over time and again.

There was utter astonishment when the result was announced. I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and Opposition Members who speak in terms of some cosy arrangement being arrived at to reduce the time involved should we revert to the northern route that there will be—one can almost feel it developing — unabated anger in west Devon and Cornwall if the Bill does not go through.

A realisation is developing that if we do not get the Bill and are thrown back into the situation of having to wait six, nine or 13 years for an alternative route to be decided for Okehampton, it will be impossible to make any move towards planning a dual carriageway route from Okehampton to Launceston.

There suddenly appears to be a dual carriageway there. It seems to break down, then to go on to another great stretch of dual carriageway. The hon. Member for Truro will confirm that along the route are great stretches with which we are waiting to connect.

The damage of such a delay to the west country in economic terms would be disastrous. Unashamedly, on behalf of my constituents and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West, I have spoken to hon. Members in all parts of the House about this, and the reaction of many of them has been, "If the local people want it, it should be supported."

I accept that it is impossible to satisfy everybody. However, when the local Member—my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West—wants it, when the town council, the parish council, another parish council close by, the district council and county council all want it, and when one goes westwards to constituencies in west Cornwall and finds that the constituency Members want it, the county council and district councils there want it, as do innumerable parish councils, they should be allowed to have it.

Hon. Members have been bombarded with submissions from the AA, RAC, Country Landowners Association, NFU, tourist and commercial organisations and even trade unions saying that they are in favour of it. Some hon. Members, notably Opposition Members, will comment, "They would say that, would they not? They are not the conservation groups."

A letter from a member of the executive of the Council for the Protection of Rural England in Cornwall, dated 4 November, states:

"When considering the two alternatives to this problem may I ask for your support for the southern route? Although the CPRE in London is pressurising for the other route it may interest you to know that after prolonged and careful discussion at the Cornwall Branch of CPRE executive committee meeting on the first of this month, a vote revealed an overwhelming majority favoured the southern route.

Amongst other reasons it was felt that the destruction of some twenty farms — and families — and the rural countryside of Devon, involving miles of hedgerows, footpaths, etc. was too heavy a price to pay for lip service to a bureaucratic line on a map and the mere scratching of the edge of the vastness of Dartmoor.

Politically, for Cornwall, the cheaper and quicker route is also preferable if our industries are ever to have hope of competing with up-country firms."

The letter comes from a local branch of a highly respected organisation well known for its commitment to conservation. Those of us who represent Cornish constituencies do well to listen to it carefully, and it is clearly committed to the construction of the southern route.

Mr. Rost: My hon. Friend has been kind to our Joint Committee. However, does he accept that, although everyone wants the southern route, they would prefer and campaign for the northern route if it could be built more

[Mr. Rost]

quickly than the southern one? Will he be big enough to admit that the important issue is to get the route that will come most quickly?

Mr. Neale: That is an interesting view. Cornwall views the matter as a Devon issue that seemed to be progressing along constitutional lines. When the inspector decided on the southern route, we felt that it must have been considered in depth and that that was the right route. We have come to study the matter more, only because we have been drawn into it by the Committee and the Bill.

In Cornwall, we are highly accountable to our conservation groups because the county depends for much of its tourist industry on conservation being maintained. I have taken the closest interest in the matter, studied it carefully and heard the views of colleagues on both sides of the House who have done the same. It is interesting that very few hon. Members have said that the southern route should not be taken. They have studied the matter and have come to the unavoidable conclusion that it should be the southern route.

Another element of the Bill that has turned anger into fury is the realisation that, because of the strange traffic flows in the west country that are distorted by tourism, if the route went too far to the north of Okehampton—the longer route—drivers would seriously consider going through the town. That has happened in other places where bypasses have been too long. That leads to the serious problem of justifying a dual carriageway. The route from Launceston to Okehampton suffers similar traffic distortions. We would again be thrown into doubt about the future of the route from the end of Whiddon Down to Launceston.

I can only repeat what the hon. Member for Truro said—no doubt my hon. Friends from Cornwall will agree with it. We cannot continue to allow people who will not accept a properly arrived at decision to have appeal after appeal. We must arrive at a decision. Perhaps the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) implied unintentionally, but I cannot see how he can suggest that the Secretary of State is acting with impatience when the matter has been around for 17 years. Every conceivable aspect has been considered. Never in the 11 years that I have been involved in Cornwall have I known such unanimity of view among people with so many different interests. That should be borne in mind.

I should like to read a short statement from my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West. He said:

"I apologise to the House for my absence. This Confirming Bill is vital to my constituents and I wish I could have been here to put their case. I have been fighting for this bypass for over fifteen years. I cannot stress too strongly how important it is for us in West Devon and Cornwall. We live in real danger in Okehampton from heavy lorries; we suffer terrible delays which are harming our economic life over a wide area. Our tourist industry is also suffering.

If we do not accept this route, that to the north would mean further long delays and a great scar over agricultural land.

I fully support the Southern route and beg this House, in spite of all the objections, to allow this Bill to go through. My constituents must not suffer any longer."

In the name of common sense, I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends and Oppositions Members to support the Bill.

7.57 pm

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): I have listened to the debate so far and hope that the House will excuse me if I regard this as not so much a debate on route options, timetables or what the Joint Committee should or should not have done, but rather as a parochial issue. The debate is about people, jobs and the quality of life for the people of Okehampton and nature's ability to restore itself. However, whether 300 years later it will bring deer back to the deer park and life to the decaying bluebells is another matter.

For many reasons, I shall not attempt to follow other speeches too closely. The debate is being conducted in the tranquillity of the House of Commons on 19 November. Had it been conducted in Okehampton in the heat of the summer, we should be following one another closely, each occupying his allocated meterage in an unending caterpillar of steel, polluting the environment with the flatulence of carbon monoxide and adding to the delays and costs that have turned Okehampton at peak times into a thrombosis of traffic suffering from the crippling constipation of congestion.

Okehampton was not invented as a town. It was created as a trading town by the free flow of people and goods. Okehampton was never intended to isolate the trade, commerce, industry and the tourism of east Devon from that of west Devon and Cornwall, as has become the reality of the 1970s and 1980s. There is no way in which the will of man can put Falmouth one mile nearer Falkirk, or Camborne one mile nearer Chorley, but the skill of the highway engineer can cut the expensive time barrier created by distance. By early next year, as the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) said, unemployment in my constituency, already at 25 per cent., will increase to 30 per cent. We need jobs, and we are not alone in the belief that this much needed bypass will help to provide them.

Much has been said about the Countryside Commission, and far too little about the Development Commission, the chairman of which, Lord Vinson, has estimated that the bypass could take up to 5,000 people off the dole in Cornwall. It could do so by opening Cornwall for industry, attracting inward investment and industrial growth and everything else that is obvious to anybody who has any ideas of the problems of peripheral areas such as Cornwall.

The great majority of industry and of British people have chosen to invest in wheels. Do the minority have the right to deny the majority the enjoyment and effective use of this chosen investment? As Professor Colin Buchanan told the convocation of the university of Leeds in 1973:

"Excessive concern for conservation could lead us in a direction potentially more dangerous than would result from non-conservation."

I am the first to concede that road construction is not a pretty sight in its earlier stages, but well-designed modern roads, bridges and bypasses usually end up adding to the sculptural qualities of the landscape. Birds, animals, butterflies and plants adapt to their new surroundings.

There may be no direct parallel between Okehampton and Blandford in Dorset, but I was interested to read what Stella Boughton wrote in a letter published in *The Times* on 5 July this year. She said:

"The recently opened Blandford bypass has given a double bonus to those who live here: the Georgian town is now quieter and safer; the banks of the bypass are being naturalised by wild

flowers. Are there, I wonder, other places where the demands of modern traffic have resulted in a return of sights and tranquillity enjoyed in past years?"

That was an open question, but I hope that the Okehampton southern route will provide the answer, and that the House will hasten the realisation of that proof.

8.2 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I realise that many Conservative Members with close constituency interests have not had an opportunity to speak, so I shall be brief. However, I must make a few comments, because I have been lobbied hard by many conservationists who oppose the proposed route. I have been to Okehampton, and both on the occasion when I went specifically to look at the proposals, and on previous occasions, I was appalled at the way in which the environment is ruined by the volume of traffic. It is not just the crawl in summer, but the heavy lorries that go through, often rapidly, during the winter months.

The case has been well made for the northern route, but, unfortunately, most of the people who are now pressing so hard for the southern route are not particularly concerned about where the route goes. They just want the road built quickly. For this, the Department of Transport must bear a great deal of blame. For many years it has made up its mind which route it prefers and then manipulated procedures to make it almost impossible to get any other route. Time after time, proposals for a section of the road go through all the stages and are agreed, but at the same time the Department prejudges the next section of road because, inevitably, the sections have to join up. The Department puts forward road proposals in a piecemeal fashion and uses its arguments to make it extremely difficult for people to put up rational objections and judge whether public opinion prefers one route or another. Most people want the route that is available most quickly.

There will also be an effect on Okehampton. When a bypass is built, that is a good opportunity to develop industry close to the road. Had the northern route been chosen, there would have been more opportunity to make use of it to develop industry near Okehampton. If the Government's intention is to keep the southern route devoid of any development close to it, it will be to the disadvantage of local people. There would be considerably more advantage in the northern route, as it would help industrial development.

The Government have argued that the bypass encroaches only on the edge of the national park. That argument perhaps has some validity, until the arguments about the drawing up of the boundaries are remembered. In almost every case they were drawn much more tightly than most conservationists liked, because of the arguments about planning procedures. Particularly when boundaries come close to market towns such as Okehampton, they are drawn away from the town and close to the attractive land, or even within it. The Government should not make too much play of this point, because the bypass encroaches on the edge of where the boundary was drawn, and not on the edge of the natural boundary.

The Government will be drawing a line through an area over which animals coming up from the lowland areas to the moorland pass. It is sad to see roads littered with the carcases of animals that have been knocked over by vehicles. By choosing the southern route, the Government have made it much more likely that animals will be injured or killed.

The procedures on the Bill have been a shambles. I hope that the reports in the Sunday papers that the Government are thinking of using the same procedure for the Channel link are false, because this procedure gives the least satisfaction to Members of Parliament, and complete dissatisfaction to all groups that lobby against a Bill, as well as those who have lobbied for it, although no doubt the latter will be pleased with the outcome.

It is ridiculous to refer the matter to a Committee of both Houses of Parliament and then to take no notice of its recommendations, and equally not give hon. Members the opportunity to consider the information on which the Committee based its recommendations. In our normal Committee procedures, hon. Members can study the report at the end of the Committee's proceedings. However, all that we have got out of the long procedures on this measure and of the money spent by objectors is a fairly brief report. If the procedure is to be used in future, it should be possible to have a complete report published, with all the information put to the Committee, so that hon. Members can make an informed judgment on it.

It is wrong to sidetrack the parliamentary procedures so that we can debate this matter only on Third Reading. Under a normal Bill, there is a proper Second Reading, the Committee and Report stages and Third Reading, all of which give an opportunity for the people involved to make their representations. We should look at this closely. It is grossly unfair if objectors spend considerable sums of money putting their proposals before the Committee and then find that, having presented their case, it is not passed on to the House through a report, and is then rejected by the House. We should look carefully at ways to pay the expenses of objectors if they have won their case before the Committee, but the House decides to find in the opposite direction.

The House is coming to the wrong conclusion. We would do far better with the northern route. The matter has been disgracefully handled by the Department of Transport, which, over the years, has used the procedures to encourage the route that it always wanted. On this occasion, it would be a salutary lesson for the Department of Transport if we turned round and said that we were not prepared to accept its proposals, and that we accepted the case made by the 12 environmental groups that the northern route would be better.

8.9 pm

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): It is a great pleasure for me to be able to tell the House that my good friend the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) was allowed by his doctor to make a fleeting appearance on television earlier today, which may or may not guide our steps in the Lobby tomorrow, but it is nice to know that at least he was fit enough to make an appearance. He stressed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) said, the requirement for the bypass to be on the southern route.

I have some qualifications to speak on the subject, which is not always the case in the House, because I was brought up in Moretonhampstead on the south of the moor and then at Bow on the north of the moor, and I represent Devon, North, which is within five miles of the proposed bypass, whichever route it takes.

[Mr. Tony Speller]

The citizens of Okehampton are not my constituents, but many people who work in, visit and travel through the town do so not just in the peak period during the summer but all through the year. To me, they appear unanimous in requiring any route, as the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said, at almost any price.

I would have no brief for a northern or southern route if one started from scratch today, but we are not starting from scratch. We have one proposal before us, and one only. There is no delineated northern route. It is not a question of saying, "If we cannot have A, we can have B tomorrow, next year or the year after." It will be one choice out of many Bs in many years to come. I stress that my constituents who work in and travel through the Okehampton area would accept the southern route because, despite the excellent pleading of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen), there is no doubt that, unfortunately, the Dartmoor that I know and have lived adjacent to has already suffered incursions far greater than this sliver of road can ever be.

I accept and pay tribute to the views of those who object to the southern route. There is nothing wrong or wicked in preferring one route to the other. I support anyone who supports the national parks. I remember well, when serving on the Devon river authority, how we were denied a reservoir at Swincombe, which would have provided Devon with water, which has been mentioned several times before. That was denied on the grounds that national parks were inviolate.

Therefore, we have the problem that many of us in the west country, from the Okehampton area, say that we believe that the national parks should be protected, "but". There is always a "but", and there is always a reason. When it comes to the crunch, human beings are more important than a road that skirts an old quarry, and goes near a golf course and a deserted deer wood. I have no pleasure in supporting a road that even touches a national park, let alone the one to which I have always lived adjacent, but time has passed and the west country is lacking in almost every form of economic development.

I must now be more parochial and say that as every civil servant in the west country who works with the Department of Transport has his eyes firmly fixed on Dartmoor and the Okehampton route, he cannot have his eyes fixed on the, to me, even more important north Devon link road. There are only so many surveyors and civil servants to go around, and there is now an unreasonable delay in the north Devon link simply and solely, I believe, because everyone has his eyes firmly fixed on the Okehampton bypass.

I make no moral judgments over the goods or the bads, but those who have spoken to me, with three exceptions, all of whom live on the north Devon coast, far from Okehampton, say that we have waited too long for the road, and that if the southern route can be built swiftly, let it be built. I add my voice to that cause.

8.15 pm

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): As a northern Member of Parliament, I shall make a brief intervention, especially as the subject has stirred the emotions of west country Members. I am sure that everyone who has listened to the debate from beginning to end, as I have, will agree that we have had a series of first-class speeches.

I have three excuses for making this intervention. First, I am the longest serving member of the Select Committee on Environment. Secondly, I have an abiding interest in tourism because I co-represent by far the biggest tourist facility in the country. Thirdly, I use the road on occasions. If that were not a sufficient excuse, last week I took the opportunity of going down and looking at the area for myself. In the clearest terms, I can say only that, looking at the proposals with a fresh eye, with no constituency interest and not feeling that it must be put through regardless, I came unhesitatingly to the conclusion that the Government had got it right. In every way that one can judge, the southern route is best.

Because it has been referred to so widely in the debate, I shall say only one or two things about the matter, and what I saw when I walked part of the route myself. The very fact that it was so populated with trees was of the greatest advantage. Today the trees mask the viaduct, which is a vast structure in parts — from the Okehampton side one can hardly see it. I know that in its early stages, the road goes through some idyllic country. When one looks at this gem of a town, one gets the impression that the country on both sides is of the highest standard, but unfortunately the motor car cannot be uninvented and we have to have a bypass. It is a hideous decision to make.

When one goes further on the southern route, one sees other advantages. Admittedly, it is not at the bottom of the valley, but it is still in the valley. The so-called bluebell wood is so thick with brambles that unless one had a hide thick enough to sit on the Treasury Bench with comfort, one would not attempt to go into that wood. We have all seen the maps, and there is a quarry. This is pure hearsay, but I am told that at the moment there is an application for a substantial increase in lorry traffic to go up and down to the quarry.

We shall destroy lovely country, whichever way we do it. If one goes for the northern route, I would caution people who think that a route relatively high up around the town will be unobtrusive. It will be a scar; it will be unprotected by trees or, if it can be protected, it will not look natural because the trees will be put in purely and simply to mask the road, and will look like a line of trees.

If anyone wants to know how difficult it is to live with such a motor road, I advise him to go to any of the small valleys in Berkshire that run south from the M4. In villages up to a mile away one hears the constant hum of motor vehicles. I should have thought that by any standard, the choice of the southern route was the preferred one.

Of course there is the argument about national parks, but whatever argument we have about that, the very fact that we have to consider going through a national park does not mean that we must choose the most damaging route environmentally. That is a conclusive reason why we should give grave and careful consideration to going south.

I shall not say any more about delay than this. I am a lawyer. At one time, with the Attorney-General, I held the record at the Old Bailey for the length of time that a case had gone on. It lasted for only about 46 days, but it seemed a fantastic length of time. That time has been greatly exceeded as the years have gone by. My strong suspicion is that the Government are absolutely right that if we have

another inquiry, 46 days might be exceeded. It was apparent from talking to those in the area that there was passionate opposition to a northern route. There would be enough money available to make that protest prolonged and probably effective. At the end of the day, what will a new inspector do? The likelihood must be that he will come to the same conclusion as the previous one. Where would we go from there?

It has been generally conceded that a bypass is vital for the people of Okehampton. Of course, others will benefit apart from them. We are not proposing to build a bypass so that Prince Charles will find it easier to drive down to the Duchy. It will be built because the working people of Cornwall and Devon need it badly. Anyone who travels by road to Cornwall—I do so myself as I am fortunate enough to have a small cottage within the county—will be only too well aware of the unemployment in the area and the difficulties that firms face in creating new jobs within it. It is an area that can do well if only transport is effective. That argument is reinforced when we consider the tourist industry, in which I am especially interested.

It has been said—I read this only recently in the newspapers — that one of Britain's problems is its attitude towards planning. I shall not denigrate our planning procedures this evening but there is much truth in what has been said about them. It was suggested in the article I read that if a German and an Englishman both invented the same item at the same time and planning was involved, the German would be in production in his factory before the Englishman had obtained planning permission. There is much truth in that.

There is some of that truth in the delay that has taken place in determining the route of the Okehampton bypass. The issue has been discussed for 16 or 17 years. It must be recognised that the tourist industry provides a great deal for our country. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) and I represent a town that earns more money from tourism than Greece and all its islands put together. The west country must make its own contribution. Perhaps that will not be so great as that made by Blackpool but it will be a great one comparably. It is in the national interest that the Okehampton bypass should be built. It is in the local interest as well and every locally elected body has voted for it and wants it. The House should heed those views.

8.22 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): It is a pleasure to take up the remarks of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell), not least because the debate has gained a great deal from the objective opinions that he has contributed to it. Some will be asking themselves why a Norfolk Member should be participating in the debate. I am doing so in part because I was a member of the Joint Select Committee. Perhaps it would be wrong to say that I sat on that Committee, because I was shanghaied on to it at D plus four day. However, it was a great privilege to be a member of it, and once I had overcome the initial shock I found it a greatly rewarding experience. The Committee was chaired expertly and sensibly by my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost). As I said when I was a member of the Committee, I could not help thinking about my constituency when discussing a first-class dual carriageway road. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is on the Treasury Bench because I know that he is aware that my constituency has problems over trunk roads.

King's Lynn's industrial base is expanding. The port is expanding, but it is losing its competitive edge because communications with the north, the midlands and the south are entirely inadequate. I am campaigning like mad to get more dual carriageway stretches constructed on the A47, which links King's Lynn with Peterborough. That is the area's link to the motorway network. There are 6 schemes in the pipeline and I am campaigning to ensure that dual carriageways are constructed. I am campaigning also for flyovers on the Hardwick and Saddlebow roundabouts. It is only by these improvements that the industry and economy of my constituency will be able to compete with other areas that have far more favourable status in terms of grant regimes and enterprise zones, for example.

Having been sidetracked from the main debate by constituency interests, I shall return to the Joint Select Committee. Every member of the Committee approached his task with an open mind. Committee members were bombarded by a larger amount of paperwork than I have ever seen before. When I was at the Bar I came across large amounts of paperwork, but the scale of that which we met as members of the Joint Select Committee was formidable. We ploughed through it and we took our task seriously. Although the raison d'etre of the Committee initially was the open space argument, that argument was widened greatly to encompass the entire national park debate and the widest of environmental debates on routes.

At the end of the day, the Committee decided 4:2 against the preferred route. I was one of the two who voted for the preferred route. I did so as I felt that a northern route was not a reasonable alternative. Although I shall explain why I reached my decision, I am reluctant in some ways to speak out because all of the members decided that it would be the Committee's decision regardless of the breakdown of the vote. My initial reaction was that the Government were probably wrong to ignore the Committee's recommendations. However, I have since discussed the matter with all the local Members and I realise that there was such a major local interest at stake that the Government were correct in bringing forward a confirming Bill. That is why I am now speaking out reluctantly. I feel that all the members of the Committee should tell the House why they reached their decision, as only then will a balanced view be presented.

I understood immediately that there was an overwhelming need for the bypass to assist the economy of the south-west. I was struck by the views of the local people and the locally elected authorities. This point was made decisively by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon). We cannot ignore the views of local people, nor can we ignore the views of local Members. As a Member of this place, I would tread warily in coming to a decision that was greatly at variance with the views of local Members. I should put myself in their position. If I were speaking out and fighting for a project in the area that I represented and members from other areas took decisions that jeopardised my campaign, I should not look too kindly upon their intervention.

As a member of the Joint Select Committee, I considered carefully the views of the inspector who presided over the public inquiry. The inquiry lasted for 96 days and I was influenced by the huge weight of evidence

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

that came before it. It encompassed so many different points of view and such a variety of submissions. It heard far more points of view than the Committee could hear in the time available to it and within the narrow confines of its brief. I was influenced also to a considerable extent by the views of the landscape advisory committee. We have heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) that the advisory committee visited Okehampton on six occasions. More importantly, it did so after the publication of circular 4/76.

The main reason why I decided to vote for the preferred route was on the wider grounds of environmental and landscape considerations. If we are to put the issue into context, it is crucial to examine a site oneself. We can hear any amount of evidence and examine any number of photomontages, but it is necessary for us to see for ourselves. One view down there is worth 1,000 words or 100 pictures. I went there with an open mind. At that juncture I really had not made my mind up. I also believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), the Chairman of our Committee, also had not fully made up his mind at that juncture.

The first thing that struck me about the southern route was that although parts of it went through particularly attractive countryside, man's hand had already influenced and tampered with that terrain south of Okehampton. I was struck straight away by the fact that parts of that landscape have been ravaged by man. There is the railway line, the disused station, the viaduct over the East Okement river, the army camp, the reservoir and the monstrous desecration in the form of Meldon quarry.

The effect of a road on an area such as that will not be minimal—I accept that it will have a profound effect on the environment—but it will be nothing like as profound as suggested in the crisis brief which has been issued by numerous bodies. It says:

"The Government's plan will not only destroy a lovely and cherished piece of countryside where people walk and ride freely through woods over furzy heaths with marvellous views. It will also put at risk every national park and designated landscape in the country."

That document has been put together well, but it is full of half truths and wild exaggerations. It does no credit to the Council for National Parks, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Dartmoor Preservation Association, the Friends of the Earth, the Open Spaces Society, the Ramblers' Association, the Residents of Okehampton Against the Moorland Route, Transport 2000 and the Youth Hostels Association. If one goes there and takes an objective view, as I did, one will see that although it is attractive countryside it must be put into its correct context.

There are 233,600 acres in the national park, of which the road will take up only 140. It will isolate 444 acres of national park. The point that has not been made is that the Exeter-Okehampton stage 3 stretch of road which is currently being built will isolate 917 acres. Superimposed on that is the fact that in any event the national park boundaries are pretty arbitrary.

The southern route does not affect the high part of the moor or the views from it. It follows the contours and does not affect access to the moors. It is absorbed into the woodland. I am pleased that the Secretary of State is arranging to have 70,000 trees planted whereas only 1,000 will be felled—so much for the road cutting through the heart of the moor. Far from it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) made clear, for most of its stretch the road will be only 60 yards from the edge of the moor and at worst only 1,000 m. As has already been made quite clear, there is no northern route as such. There is the route that was put to the Committee by the petitioners, and that was an amalgam of earlier northern routes. No northern route has been properly surveyed or is in any early stage of preparation.

The northern route will be a good deal longer and will be clearly visible from the moors. It will require long embankments to meet design standards for gradients, and they will be extremely disfiguring. The viaduct across the Okement river will be 95 ft high—twice as high as the viaduct on the southern route. A raised interchange will also be needed, where at present there is a hollow. That road will cut through open space at Abbeyford Woods, and there will be loss of jobs at Aggett's quarry.

The agriculture argument did not have so much impact on me as it might have done given that I represent a farming constituency. We all know that at present agriculture is in a great state of flux with milk quotas and falling land prices. The importance that the inspector attached to this at the time of the public inquiry no longer carries the same weight.

One of the flaws of the Joint Committee was that it did not hear objections to the northern route. A number of Department witnesses referred to numerous different aspects of that route, but no objectors to it were formally brought before the Committee. That was a flaw, given that we had widened our remit.

On 3 August 1985, Lord Courtenay wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* and stated:

"Any northern route on the other hand inevitably crosses high ground to the north of Okehampton involving a viaduct and cuttings. It is, of course, much longer involving more land as well as more cost and inevitably it will cause a great scar across a very beautiful part of Devon countryside which will be visible for miles around and not least from many parts of the Dartmoor National Park."

He added:

"By any normal rational criteria environmental groups would be united in their opposition to the immensely damaging northern route and in their support for the unobtrusive southern route. The reason that they are not of course, and this is the nub of the whole question, is that the northern boundary of the Dartmoor National Park was not drawn as it might have been at the foot of the Dartmoor escarpment nor along the railway line but turned North-West to the present A30. In short, this whole dispute, which leads to so much passion and is likely to take up a whole lot more parliamentary time is literally about a few hundred yards difference in the arbitrary drawing of a bureaucratic line on a map".

That letter sums up many of the points that have already been made. We must look at the overall impact of the two routes—the preferred route, and the northern route that was put to the Joint Committee.

The southern route is shorter, neater and cuts through terrain that has already been tampered with by man. It blends well into the landscape. The other is far longer and much more unnatural. Far from blending into the countryside, it is a blot on beautiful virgin Devon landscape that has scarcely been altered since the time of the Druids.

All land is part of our national heritage. Those who farm it or own it do so as trustees for the rest of us and for

our successors. A piece of countryside may not be designated national park, but that does not mean that intrinsically it is any less beautiful or less worth protecting or saving. All land must be looked at on its merits. In this case, these two pieces of very beautiful landscape must also be looked at on their merits.

An overwhelming case has today been made in favour of the southern route in the context of landscaping. It wins hands down. If tonight this House does not confirm the order, it will be economically disastrous to the west country and a disastrous day for the environment.

8.39 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Several of my hon. Friends started by mentioning their qualifications to speak about Okehampton and I do not see why I should depart from that approach.

I have travelled to Okehampton on many occasions to appear in courts there. I have also tried to travel to Cornwall to do the same thing. In doing so, I have come to know something about the quality of life of the people who live in Okehampton. It is rather trite to talk about traffic jams, the lack of a bypass and the quality of life; it is the sort of hyperbolic comment that can easily be made. But for anyone who has to live or work in Okehampton, at the height of the traffic jams life is unbearable. Pedestrians have to suffer the effect of vehicles which are stationary but with their engines running. In addition to the exhaust fumes and the mess, in the summer there is the heat. Anyone who has any doubt about the conditions there should go and see them for himself. If ever a bypass was needed, it is at Okehampton.

I listened with great care to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) indicating his opposition to the southern route. I realised that we had a great deal in common but that there were several issues dividing us. He said that he had a long acquaintance with and love for Dartmoor, going back to his boyhood. My acquaintance with Dartmoor may not go back as far as my hon. Friend's, but I have a slightly different perspective. I did not visit that part of the world as a holidaymaker when I was a child. I knew it because I was west country born and bred and because Devon was my home. Therefore, to that extent I have, I would hope, every bit as much of an acquaintance with and love for Dartmoor as my hon. Friend has, but at the same time I realise that there are differences between us.

Having been brought up in Devon, as my forefathers were before me, I have another perspective about Devon. To me it was not just a matter of looking at the environment and having a great love for Dartmoor; there was something else about it. The needs of people who care about Dartmoor have to be balanced with those of people who care about the agricultural environment — the farmers who have farmed land there for generations. They do not regard the Dartmoor national park as something simply to be preserved. They have to think about the countryside as a whole, as an environment in which they live and work and from which they derive their income. With that background, I suspect that I have a slightly more amplified perspective than that of my hon. Friend.

There seem to have been two themes running through the debate and in the substantial correspondence that I have had from people who for the most part, although not exclusively, have opposed the southern route. There was a feeling, certainly in the correspondence, that we should regard national park land as sacrosanct, never to be tampered with or touched in any circumstances whatever. Despite the fact that my hon. Friend is nodding, I remind him that he did not put his case as strongly as that when he was speaking to the House, and I can well understand why he did not. There is no doubt that some of the passions which have been whipped up on the subject—I do not say by whom—have inclined many of my correspondents to say that national park land is sacrosanct. It is not, and it could not be.

The nearest thing to being sacrosanct is the home that a person might own and his family have lived in for generations, and in which he will have invested his money, care and pride, but we have procedures in law enabling compulsory purchase orders to be made for people's homes. Those procedures are not to be entered upon lightly, but they are there when the need arises. One could conceive of circumstances in which it would be necessary to serve compulsory purchase orders on homes owned by hon. Members. One would not do it lightly but it might have to be done in certain circumstances. National park land, I repeat, cannot be sacrosanct.

The other theme that I detected—more aggressively in correspondence than in some of the speeches from hon. Members opposing the southern route—is that somehow the effect that the northern route would have on agricultural land can be brushed aside. It is utterly wrong to allow the whole environment issue to be hijacked by those who do not regard farmers and agricultural land as part of the environment. They are part of the environment. When motorways and dual carriageways are constructed, that also involves the desecration of agricultural land if such roads have to go through it. Sometimes they do. One cannot take the attitude that it does not matter because it is only agricultural land. In the west country we get a little tired of that attitude.

Through the years we have heard the argument, "We do not want any reservoirs on Dartmoor. Put them on agricultural land. That does not matter. The farmers can be compensated. They are probably too rich, anyway. We do not want our little playground to be interfered with. Put the reservoirs on agricultural land where it does not matter." I acquit my hon. Friend of the charge of putting the argument in that way. I listened with great care to his speech to make certain that I had not missed his point. I could not accuse him of dealing with the agricultural question in a cavalier manner, because basically he did not deal with it at all.

One cannot refer to the northern route and say that it would take only a little more agricultural land and would be only a little more expensive. My hon. Friend is not in a position to say that it will take only eight acres. I do not know how many acres the northern route would take. Nobody knows what the northern route would be. There could be 17 or 70 routes, but it is abundantly clear that it would take a great deal more agricultual land than the southern route, and that land to the north is of a higher quality.

Some hon. Members have talked about property values and said that perhaps it does not matter so much because the value of agricultural land has gone down. I remind hon. Members that agricultural land is also land on which people work and to which they have a commitment. They and their families may have farmed it for generations. It is not just a matter of writing out a cheque drawn on the taxpayer and saying to the farmer, "There you are. That's

[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]

your money. Push off. We want your land for something else." When we talk of taking agricultural land away—even when it is necessary—we are talking of the severe disruption of communities and of the agricultural way of life. The environment is not just the middle-class playground of Dartmoor, as some people see it. There are also the agricultural communities. My hon. Friend did not begin to address himself to that point. The fact that he can talk about a loss of only eight acres, knowing, as he does, that the site of a northern route has not even been decided, speaks volumes. Anyone wanting support for that proposition should look at the position of the National Farmers Union.

My hon. Friend will be aware of the useful work done by the NFU. In its briefing material it makes the point that usually it would not back one set of farmers against another. The NFU has pointed out that farmers on the southern route who would be affected are so convinced that there should be a southern route that there is no dispute or animosity between them and those on the northern side of Okehampton. There is a great discrepancy between the value of agricultural land in the south as compared with the north. We cannot ignore the agricultural input. A proper balance has to be achieved.

Mention has been made of a reasonable alternative. Does the northern route represent a reasonable alternative? My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) asked my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) what "reasonable" meant. As lawyers, my hon. Friend and I know that "reasonable" means reasonable. That is the beginning and end of it.

The reason why the word "reasonable" is inserted there, as it is inserted in so many statutes, is not just to enable people like me to make a modest living by interpreting what that word means in particular cases. It has another function. It is an important qualifying word. There is no doubt at all that there is an alternative to the southern route. It is a viable alternative. It is also a feasible alternative. It cannot be reasonable to take a route which descrates countryside which cannot possibly be camouflaged, the route of which is uncertain and which at the very least will mean delay in producing the bypass that Okehampton needs. Whether it is three, five, seven or 10 years, the delay will be substantial.

Those circumstances have to be compared with a route the site of which is known. It is heavily landscaped. When those two routes are compared, one cannot possibly say that one of those routes is a reasonable alternative. It is an alternative. It is not reasonable. As my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) said, if we were starting from scratch, the northern route would perhaps be a reasonable alternative. It might be, but I do not think that it would be. However, we are not starting from scratch. For the reasons that I have given, it cannot be said that the northern route represents a reasonable alternative.

I referred earlier to themes which I had detected as running through the debate. I referred to the fact that I had received a substantial correspondence from people who, to judge by their letters, are passionately concerned about the fate of the moor, without realising that there are other aspects to the countryside. One of the other themes was the deer park. It is all very well to talk about a deer park. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) said, that part of the countryside has already been greatly interfered with. Apart from a medieval deer park that is devoid of deer, other areas have to be considered as well. Bluebell Woods is an absolute thicket. Then there is Meldon quarry. To take the road to Meldon quarry is quite an education. One would have to be deaf and blind to enjoy the rural tranquillity of that area. To try to suggest that Meldon quarry represents the tranquillity of Dartmoor is stretching the imagination far too far. As for Bluebell Woods, the locals never knew it as Bluebell Woods, but it is a lovely, emotive phrase which appeals very much to imported, middle-class townies. They love it; it is a marvellous phrase. Those hon. Members who have taken the trouble to go and see Meldon wood know that it is not quite the arcadian copse that has been described.

One is conscious of the fact that all the democratic institutions that will be affected by the bypass have voted in favour of the southern route and that this was one of the longest public inquiries in history. I have no doubt about where that route should go. When I began to receive correspondence and saw the type of representations, I wondered whether something had changed in the last two years. Therefore, I went back on Monday to see what it is like in that area. I saw Bluebell Woods. I saw the deer park and, so far as one can identify it, I saw where the northern route would go. I realised, too, the extreme difficulty of getting a view of where the southern route would go. I was left in no doubt about where the route should go.

This cannot be an easy decision for hon. Members. It cannot have been an easy decision for the inspector. However, he took evidence over a prolonged period and made up his mind about what is reasonable. His view cannot be ignored. As we debate this matter tonight, there is no reasonable alternative to the southern route.

8.55 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): It is appropriate, in a way, that I should be the last Back Bencher to take part in this debate, because I represent the end of the road. Land's End is in my constituency, although it stretches beyond it to the Isles of Scilly. I am glad to be following my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) because I, too, am a west-country-man, born and bred. That colours one's approach to these matters. I do not claim to be so impartial as certain hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. I applaud the speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell). I applaud also the speech of the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) and for Erewash (Mr. Rost), who had the difficult job of looking into this matter.

I thought that my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash betrayed unnecessary sensitivity on the subject. None of us who take a different view from that which he favours doubt his sincerity, or the manner in which he approached this difficult task. However, some of us think that he got the wrong answer. I do not blame him for that. As he said, it is a very difficult decision and he came down on one side of the argument, whereas the inspector came down on the other side of it. The inspector sat on that inquiry for 96 days. Despite my hon. Friend's speech, I did not hear him mention any of the new evidence that was available to him

but which was not available to the inquiry. He referred to the railway and various other matters, but they were before the inquiry. My hon. Friend said as much himself.

I, too, love Dartmoor. It goes back to a night of filthy weather when I lost a platoon of the Devonshire Regiment. I have already said that I represent the most westerly constituency in the United Kingdom, and that rightly colours my approach to the subject.

I have been sitting on this Bench for over five hours. If I had set out from this place over five hours ago and driven like the clappers to reach my home in West Cornwall, I should not have reached there yet. I could not reach my home in the height of the summer in that period of time. I certainly would not have reached my home if, as nearly always happens, when I get to the end of the dual carriageway at Whiddon Down, I find two lorries are holding me up all along that dreadful road through Okehampton and out the other side. Then there are the fits and starts of the A30. Every hon. Member with a Cornish constituency knows it and loathes it. One gets going on a good bit of road and then, suddenly, it is a single-track road. Such driving conditions are dangerous.

The right hon. Member for Halton mentioned the needs of professional drivers — lorry drivers. A week or so ago, a furniture lorry set out from my home in west Cornwall to bring a few modest sticks of furniture to the flat that I have taken not far from this place. The lorry did not arrive that day. It ran out of driver's hours. The lorry was held up and had to make the delivery the next day. That experience is shared by many people in the haulage business.

The people who have come together on this issue in Cornwall know the road well and have suffered on it. They include members of the Road Haulage Association. Of course the association has a vested interest, but it is a proper vested interest, as the right hon. Member for Halton recognised. We have heard about the quality of farming land north and south of Okehampton. The Cornish branch of the National Farmers Union is interested in getting produce to London — again, that is a proper vested interest and one that should be taken into account. It is concerned about the road. The hauliers of fish, which makes an important contribution to Cornwall's economy, also face considerable difficulties because of this road.

Perhaps the industry that is most affected is tourism. I echo what several hon. Members have said. I cannot help wondering about the poor holidaymakers this summer who were stuck on the approaches to Okehampton on the way to or from Cornwall. I bet that many said, "I will never face that again." The House should take that factor into account as well.

There has been unanimity in Cornwall — not only from those with a direct commercial interest but from those who represent the county at all levels. We have heard about the way in which the Devon councils have come together — the same is true to a greater extent in Cornwall. I think that only one or two members of the county council are against the proposal. I pay tribute to the county council for the lead that it has given, with the chambers of commerce and the other interests which I have mentioned, in pressing for the bypass. I believe that the district councils are also unanimous. All five Members of Parliament for Cornwall are as one on this issue. I pay full tribute to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) for setting out their case. Those Members who represent Cornwall would back him.

Fourteen of the 16 Members of Parliament who represent the counties of Devon and Cornwall back the southern route and the Bill. That support is significant. The two exceptions are my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams and the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). The right hon. Gentleman was here at the beginning of the debate but, considering his stand, he disappeared early in the debate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: He will be back.

Mr. Harris: He will be back.

Whatever the state of the Liberal party on this matter —I am not making any political points, Mr. Speaker— the SDP is the one party that is united against the Government, against the southern route and against the wishes of the Cornish people. I hope that, even at this late hour, the hon. Member for Truro will have a word with his colleague the right hon. Member for Devonport before the Division is called and tell the right hon. Gentleman that he has made a mistake and that he cannot plead for better infrastructure to help the people of Cornwall and, at the same time, vote against the most vital piece of infrastructure for that county.

I shall return to the merits of the case. Although I admit to being somewhat biased, I listened to the debate carefully and there can be little doubt that the argument has been won convincingly and fairly by those who support the Government on the Bill.

I give my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State great credit because he was faced with a difficult decision. When he introduced the Bill it was inevitably said that he was trying to trample on the constitutional rights of some people and that he would run into trouble in another place. I believe that there will be an overwhelming vote in favour of the Bill, not because of whipping but because it is right. I hope and believe that Members of another place will look to the result in this House and take full note of it when they come to give their proper consideration to the measure.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to a sign which for many years has been at the end of the dual carriageway at Whiddon Down some miles to the east of Okehampton. The sign states:

"Temporary end of dual carriageway."

I am reliably informed that that sign has been replaced twice because it has been worn out. Be that as it may, the time has come for the House to take a decision to ensure that that bottleneck is dealt with. The right way to deal with it is to vote for the Bill so that we can bypass Okehampton by the southern route, because on environmental grounds that is the correct route. Above all, it is the correct route if that bottleneck is to be removed reasonably quickly.

Without fear of successful contradiction, I can say that the people of Cornwall accept that. I believe that the people of Devon accept it and I believe that it is right to take that decision tonight.

9.7 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): In the last two or three minutes available to Back Benchers, I want to put the unbiased views of someone who comes from nearly as far away from Okehampton as the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). I put my view as someone involved with the countryside, conservation and the heritage and as a member of the Nature Conservancy Council and, the National Trust for Scotland, and as a

[Sir Hector Monro]

former Minister responsible for national parks. It might therefore be thought that I favour the northern route but, having carefully considered the ground, the maps and all aspects of the case, and having listened to the most splendid speeches, I am 100 per cent. in favour of the southern route.

Too much weight has been placed on the views of those who are against the southern route on the narrow national park issue. When the Dartmoor national park was originally drawn up, who decided where its boundaries would be drawn? They might have been decided because of the railway line, the road, parish boundaries or the rivers, or on the whim of the civil servants who were given the job.

The country to the north, the west and the east of Okehampton is just as beautiful as that to the south. It would be wrong to place too much weight on the suggestion that one part of the area is more beautiful than another. We should not place all the emphasis on the original line of the national park. The fact that additional land would be made available for the park more than balances that which will be taken away.

Sufficient tribute has not been paid to the tremendous work of those who look after the national park, because for many years it has enhanced Dartmoor. That tribute also goes to our other national parks, because we are wonderfully served by those who work on our behalf to keep them as beautiful as they are.

At the beginning of the debate, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) said that the decision about which route to take must be the result of a balanced judgment. One must weigh the evidence and study the Joint Committee's report, but at the end of the day, when one looks at the site and the projected landscaping of the road, there is no doubt that one will come down in favour of the southern route and in support of the people of Okehampton, and in particular in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills). We have to use that balanced judgment and decide against the issues of the railway line, the quarry and the Army camp, all of which are man-made, and all of which despoil the beauty of the national park.

When the landscaping is completed, the new road will enhance the area, but over and above that it will give a tremendous advantage to the whole of the west country and to development generally. An hon. Member wisely mentioned the view of the Development Commission. The debate must bring home the strong case that the Government have on this Bill but it must also show the Members in another place the strength of feeling in this House. We must show that we do not wish to see the Bill tampered with or amended in any substantial way at the whim of certain people in another place who have no more experience than have hon. Members of this House.

9.12 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): This House can be proud of itself for the fact that it has devoted a whole day in peak time to discussing this important issue. I suppose we are talking in two dimensions. At one level we are talking about the bypass. It will have a knock-on effect and, I hope will improve the economy of our two most south-westerly counties. At the same time, we are debating an important principle about which there has been disagreement between the parties and throughout the House about whether the bypass should run across one of our few national parks.

Before I develop my argument, may I say that my only regret, which I am sure is shared by all hon. Members, is that we are not having the debate in the presence of the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills). He and I often crossed swords when we debated countryside matters, but we came to respect each other's sincerity in our beliefs and I sincerely regret he is not here.

I am looking forward to hearing the comments of the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold). I shall be hearing her for the first time at the Dispatch Box and I welcome her in that role.

In one sense, this has been a good debate. It has been a debate of emotions and, in a sense, it has been a mixed debate. The characteristics of each hon. Member have come out. We heard the spirited reaction which nobody could mistake of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon), and the cool logic of the hon. Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost), who in a clinical way went to the nub of the problem and gave the House a report of the way in which earlier this year his Joint Committee went about looking at the problem of the bypass.

We have had the benefit of the experience of two eminent former Cabinet Ministers, my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon). Many other hon. Members have spoken in the debate and increased its quality.

Having listened to all the arguments, I still believe that we are making subjective and value judgments. Clearly, when considering subjective matters, there must be disagreements. It is important to put it on record—even if it is only a message for the other place—that there is some common ground in the House, and it revolves mainly around two aspects. The first is that Okehampton badly needs a bypass, and the second is that it needs to be of dual carriageway standard. I could perhaps stretch the common ground a little further and say that most of us believe that the road should be built as quickly as possible. However, we must consider the price and the cost—although not in financial terms.

Obviously there are differing views. I accept that the local democratically elected authorities have, by a majority, come down in favour of the southern route. However, the issue is not quite as clear as it might appear. The hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) made a useful contribution when he spelt out the voting figures for the two principal local authorities concerned. It is worth repeating those figures, as some hon. Members may not have been in the Chamber when he gave them. The Okehampton town council favoured the southern route by 10 votes to six; the Devon county council favoured it by only 38 votes to 34. That vote does not really manifest itself in the way in which the issue has been portrayed today. There is a difference of opinion in the locality, and I certainly recognised that when I was in Okehampton.

My impression was that people were sick of the delay and felt that the sooner the matter was sorted out, the better. I believe that that is why there was a majority in favour of the southern route.

Mr. Penhaligon: The hon. Gentleman accurately reports the vote of the Devon county council. However,

he said that he was referring to the two principal councils involved. I must point out that, although I accept that Okehampton town council is primarily concerned, the other councils concerned are, in order, West Devon, Cornwall and, last of all, Devon.

Dr. Clark: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I am trying to spell out the views of some of those living in the area. I was trying to portray the voting patterns in a different manner from the way in which they have been presented generally in the debate. The hon. Gentleman has made a strong point in saying that the feeling Cornwall is, if anything, stronger then the feeling in the county of Devon and in Okehampton itself.

I hope that, when the bypass and the road improvements are completed, the hon. Gentleman is not disappointed with the economic regeneration that he hopes will come to Cornwall. The north of England has experienced similar difficulties. I listened with awe to the figures that he gave for male unemployment, but they in no way match the figures for the north-east of England, terrible though they may be. Good road links from the south to the north have not solved the economic problems of the northern region. However, I wish him well.

Let us consider some of the arguments by the supporters of the Bill. One of their main arguments centres around circular 4/76. As the House knows, the circular said that there should be no new or upgraded road going through a national park unless there was a compelling reason. I have paraphrased the circular, but that is the main principle.

One of the reasons for going against that circular was forcefully stated by the hon. Member for Truro. He said that the proposal touched only a very small part of the national park. According to my calculations, only 0·05 per cent. of the national park will be affected. People connected with human biology advise me that that is equivalent to the space occupied by the eyes in the human form, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Truro will agree that they are necessary parts of the human body. Even if only the fringe of the national park is affected, that part may be one of the most attractive areas of the park.

When the Secretary of State introduced the Bill, he rightly pointed out that the bypass skirted the fringe of the national park, but in 1965 Mr. Charles Johnson, a planning inspector in a previous planning inquiry in the immediate vicinity, said:

"The rarest beauties of the moor belong to its fringes, not to the upland wastes."

I accept that that is a subjective judgment, but it is the judgment of an expert.

Mr. Rost: The point is not that the bypass is on the fringe of the national park or that it necessarily affects the most beautiful areas, but that it cuts Okehampton off from its natural environment. Most visitors going to Okehampton want to use the amenities within one or two miles of the edge of the moor. The proposal would cut them off completely.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman is right. I proposed to make that point later, but I shall develop it now to save time. The bypass cuts off the access from the town of Okehampton and one of the reasons why Okehampton is so attractive is that it has access to the open moors through the wooded area. If the bypass cuts across that area, it will deter people from going to Okehampton.

I remind the House that walking — I mean short walks of two or three miles—is, according to the last household survey, the most popular outdoor pastime in the United Kingdom. More and more people are demanding it, and we should not stop them.

Mr. Rippon: The hon. Gentleman referred to circular 4/76. Does he agree that the Labour Government proposed the southern route after the publication of that circular and that the southern route was proposed by Mr. William Rodgers, then Secretary of State for Transport and now in the SDP?

Dr. Clark: I disagreed with Mr. Bill Rodgers then and I have disagreed with him a great many times since. It is pointless being consistently wrong and that is no good reason to follow the southern route.

In evidence for the Dartmoor National Park Office—the local authority plus the national representatives responsible for looking after and administering the Dartmoor national park—Mr. Ian Mercer said that the proposed southern route would

"cut through the centre of Okehampton park, regarded as the largest medieval deer park in Devon."

Conservative Members have poked fun at the fact that there are no deer in the park, but the presence of deer is not essential to make the land attractive. I am afraid that, as the right hon. and learned Member for Hexham knows, trees are not a vital part of a forest; in medieval terminology there are many forests which, like Dartmoor itself, are denuded of trees but are equally attractive. Ian Mercer says:

"Significant areas of the old park remain unchanged since its creation in the 13th century . . . the present parkland is our inheritance from the ancient forest that once covered most of Devon. Such parks are rare."

He further stated:

"as an ecological habitat Okehampton Park is irreplaceable . . . rich ornithologically . . . the construction, existence and use of the road would damage forever the whole of this delicate complex of habitats."

That is what is at stake today.

Mr. Ridley: When I was last in Okehampton I saw a photograph of the southern route taken from Okehampton castle in about 1890. There were no trees at all—just bare grazing grass—so it is not quite true to say that the forest has been there for all time.

Dr. Clark: I, too, have had a good look at the area and in my humble aesthetic judgment it is exceedingly attractive. I believe that that view is shared by the overwhelming majority of people in this country. That is why hon. Members on both sides have received so much correspondence on this.

Let us now consider the views of the Government's own advisers. The Countryside Commission, charged by the House to tender advice on these matters, states:

"The landscape which would be affected by the northern route is indeed pleasant, but it is not of national significance or comparable in quality to that to the south of the town. In environmental terms, therefore, the Commission, which is the statutory body . . . considers the southern route to be far more damaging than the alternative."

That is my judgment, too. The landscape on the northern side is certainly very pretty, although I thought that the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) was pushing his luck a little too far and perhaps exaggerating somewhat when he said that the land had been unchanged since the Druids. If that is true, I can only say that they built very good walls in those days. It is decent, good quality farm land and in national terms, but it is not unique and in my view should not be sacrosanct.

Mr. Neale: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I am sorry. We are short of time and I want the Minister to have plenty of time to respond to the many questions that have been asked.

On the crucial subject of delay, I wish to make it clear that Labour Members do not take the view that there should not be a public inquiry. Such an inquiry is an essential safeguard to protect the democratic rights of those who feel aggrieved. I wish to nail at the outset the suggestion of some Conservative Members that that is not our position.

The difficulty lies in trying to work out how long the delay will be, according to the Minister. [HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] Hon. Members say that it is too long, but let us try to work it out. We believe that the Government are guilty of exaggerating the delay in their attempts to persuade and bully the House into accepting a route which is not the most desirable. As I understand it, if the Bill is passed by this House and another place and becomes law, the southern route will be completed in 1989. I am going through this slowly, because it is important that the House is aware of the timetable.

The Secretary of State has said that it will take eight or nine years to finish the road and that October 1993 may be the appropriate date. I think the Minister is indicating that that is the scenario. Yet the Minister of State said on television recently that it would take 13 years. She said nine years from where we are today; in other words, if we add on the three-year building period, we are talking about 13 years, so there is confusion. It is right, therefore, that independent assessors have been brought in to analyse the time saving which could be achieved with the alternative route. The expert, Mr. Parker, expressed the view that the difference would be two or three years, which means in effect that the northern route might be finished in December 1990 instead of 1989.

Mr. Ridley: It will take about three years from now to complete the southern route, so it should be finished by the end of 1988, not 1989.

Dr. Clark: That is helpful. I am talking about a date in 1990, according to Mr. Parker, which is a delay of two and a bit years.

The Countryside Commission queried the figure and asked a reputable firm of engineers to check it. The Countryside Commission has put in the Library of the House its evidence. It has come to the conclusion, because of the letter from its expert, that the findings of Mr. Parker are reasonable and are likely to be correct. So we believe that the delay will be only an extra two or three years. The point of the shortened timetable is that there is no need for further public consultation——

Mr. Ridley: Oh!

Dr. Clark: Let me take it a stage further before the Secretary of State says, "Oh."

The public have already been consulted on a route very similar to route M. Indeed, route M is much closer to the red route about which the public were consulted than the preferred southern route is to the green southern route about which they were consulted. The point I am making to the Secretary of State is that the northern route would be on a line closer to that about which there was consultation than the southern route for which the Minister has accepted the consultation that has taken place. There would be no need to reassess traffic demands because that has been done. The landscape advisory committee has inspected the northern option——

Mr. Ridley: Careful.

Dr. Clark: With respect to the Secretary of State, the landscape advisory committee — appointed by and responsible to his Department, as opposed to the other statutory landscape advisory body, the Countryside Commission, which is completely independent — has examined the northern route and given its opinion on it.

The point that has been agreed by two independent assessors, qualified road engineers, is that the timetable can easily be shortened. The Department of Transport has followed that procedure on the M40 at Ot Moor, so a precedent has been laid down. We charge the Department and the Minister with exaggerating the delay in order to browbeat the House into accepting a route which should not be accepted.

Great attention has been centred on the plight not only of holidaymakers but of heavy goods vehicle drivers— the traffic that goes through Okehampton in summer and in winter from parts of west Devon and Cornwall.

Other lorry drivers use Okehampton. Indeed, Okehampton is trying to develop an industrial base, and a new bit of evidence to come to light between the 1979 public inquiry and the Select Committee investigation has been the development of the industrial site on North road, Okehampton. On that site are now employed 660 people and about 250 lorries a day call there. All those lorries must not only go through the centre of Okehampton but must use North road or Northfield road, which are narrow streets, to get to and from that industrial estate.

If we have a southern route, those lorries will still have to use the centre of Okehampton. If we have a northern route, it will be easy to link the industrial estate in North road to that northern bypass. In other words, not only in terms of traffic is the northern route preferable, but also in terms of the environment.

A point has been omitted from the debate. While people have cast aspersions on the motives of certain amenity societies, none of those societies has anything to gain financially out of the northern route. Indeed, many of them have spent much money fighting for their beliefs. They do not apologise for the stand that they have made and many of them have said that they do not want their money back because of their belief in fighting to protect the environment. Some environmentalists are worried because of what has happened in the past. I cite the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill as an example of a measure which would destroy the environment. No wonder much concern is felt on issues of this kind.

Obviously the national parks are special. The fact that this House back in 1949 deemed that certain parts of England and Wales were in need of a special form of administration and protection make them stand out from the rest of the countryside. Their very uniqueness requires us, in the sovereign body of Parliament, to protect them in a way in which we are not required to protect what I might call the ordinary environment. If there is doubt, we should give the benefit of that doubt to the national park.

Like the Minister and many hon. Members, I have been to have a look. It is my subjective judgment that the northern route is infinitely superior in environmental terms to the southern route. Hon. Members should tonight make

a stand for the national parks and not allow the Bill to go through because we do not want a southern bypass at Okehampton.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I dare say that most newly appointed Ministers make tentative inquiries, when taking up post, about their responsibilities. When I discovered that mine would embrace the protection of the environment, I was glad, because I believe that the House should spend more time, as it has spent time today—the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made this point—on this most important area, which deserves the time of hon. Members.

It also became evident to me, as the most junior of Ministers, that I would be expected to pick up the pieces after difficult and contentious debates. Little did I think that my first speech in reply to a debate would be on a matter of immense environmental sensitivity, although perhaps today's debate on the siting of the Okehampton bypass has not been quite so contentious as it was heralded.

I have listened to the debate with great attention and I have been impressed with the concern for principle that has been expressed, a point that the hon. Member for South Shields confirmed. There have been some clearly expressed emotions on a most important issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mr. Rost) was at great pains to outline clearly why the Joint Committee came to its conclusions. It was important for us to listen to those reasons. He said that the landscape advisory committee had visited the route before it was known that the railways would not close. In fact, the visit was made after it was known that the railway would not close. There was no evidence to the Joint Committee that the delay would be for only two or three years.

My hon. Friend conveyed the notion that the Joint Committee could be regarded as a court of appeal. The Joint Committee could in no way act as a court of appeal. A court of appeal reviews the whole matter which was before the lower court. The Committee was not qualified and had no jurisdiction regarding the public inquiry to do so. A legal court of appeal gives a decision on the law and the Committee simply advises on the expediency of an administrative order. It is important to get that straight.

The protection of our national parks provokes much feeling. As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) acknowledged, it is not a trivial matter. It is all the more important that the final decisions should rest on the process of reason and the application of common sense. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Rippon) said, it is a matter of a balance of judgment, which should favour the local people. We should consider local people's views carefully.

There seems little doubt on one issue—we all agree that Okehampton must have a bypass. All hon. Members acknowledged that today. It is not the need for a bypass that creates debate, but where it should be sited.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) delighted the House this afternoon with his explicit geography lesson, together with map, that demonstrated the merits and demerits—depending on how one looks at his map — of the southern route. He pointed out that the Dartmoor national park covers fewer than 233,000 acres of land. The proposed southern route would encroach on a small proportion of that acreage. The hon. Member for Truro clearly stated that the incursions into the national park, although sad, were somewhat exaggerated.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear the urgency for the decision. That view has been echoed by many hon. Members on both sides of the House, not least by the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes), if for no other reason than the relief of intolerable pressure on the town of Okehampton. Many hon. Members have acknowledged the difficulties facing the Government in taking this decision, but have rightly pointed out that it is the Government's responsibility to make judgments and act upon them.

My task is to allay the fears of those who believe that, by taking this decision, the Government have abrogated their commitment to the future well-being of the countryside, especially the national parks.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) made an interesting point — when considering the importance of national parks policy, it must be brought to the attention of the House that a large majority of hon. Members who represent Devon and Cornwall have favoured the southern route. That is a pressing point.

Many hon. Members have spoken of the importance of national park and the countryside, and some have expressed their worries about the effects of the southern route on Dartmoor. The Government's track record on developing practical conservation policies is second to none. Through legislation and financial support, we have demonstrated a firm and continuing commitment to safeguarding the environment and our tackling of Okehampton's traffic problems is in line with that commitment.

I take comfort from the rigorous words of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell). He made a supportive speech and said that he visited the site with an open mind and was convinced that the southern route is right. I am sure that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will reach the same conclusion. My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) had a much more difficult job convincing himself of the correctness of the southern route, as he was a member of the Joint Committee. He told us that the terrain had already been tampered with by the railways, the quarries and the viaduct.

Like many others, I have visited Okehampton to see how the proposed decision would affect the national park, and what the other choices offer.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The discussion of the bypass has boosted tourism in Okehampton.

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman is right. More hon. Members must have visited Okehampton in the past month than ever before. I went to Okehampton with as open a mind as possible and visited each sector of the proposed route while viewing carefully the possible impact of a northern route, which has been eloquently advocated by many hon. Members, especially my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) and the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes).

I am not afraid to admit that I felt a frisson of dismay when I first saw the woods at Fatherford over which it is proposed to build the road on a viaduct, but as our tour continued, I was made aware of the value of the argument

[Mrs. Rumbold]

advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West. The environmental damage done by such a route was clear and the visibility of any northern route would also do environmental damage. It was obvious that any such solution would not be acceptable to all.

I should like to take my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams up on some of what he said. He said that, if the southern route was built, there would still be a bottleneck as it would simply be transferred to the west by the bypass. That is not so, as Okehampton is the bottleneck, not the single carriageway. The traffic queues extend to the east and to the west and are caused by restrictions of the traffic flow in the town, principally by traffic lights.

The need for a bypass to overcome the problem has not been questioned. My hon. Friend also spoke of a combination of the northern bypass and the Okehampton to Launceston scheme and argued that if the Bill were enacted, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be able to proceed quickly with the neighbouring dual-carriageway scheme from Okehampton to Launceston and that it might open in six years.

If the Bill is lost, however, and we proceed with a northern bypass, my right hon. Friend would have to consider combining the northern bypass with the Okehampton to Launceston scheme and deal with them both at one inquiry. The resultant much larger scheme would throw up new problems and further delays to both schemes. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams will accept that his suggestions for the northern route are not as acceptable as he might have felt.

The nub of the objection to the southern route centres round two themes. On the one hand, it is held that untold desecration of the Dartmoor national park will take place, and that this will destroy well-known beauty spots. The other theme is that the Government have overturned their policy on trunk roads and national parks as set out in the circular 4/76, issued by the Department of the Environment during the course of a Labour Government.

It has been claimed that we are creating a dangerous precedent with the Okehampton bypass and that no national park will be safe if the Bill proceeds. I cannot stress firmly enough to hon. Members that whatever the final outcome of the debates in the House and the other place, no one should believe that the decision to pursue the southern route with the bypass sets a precedent of any kind. As my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) so clearly stated, the security of the national parks depends on reason rather than on law and it is a matter of judgment where one draws the boundaries of a national park.

Okehampton is a prime example for the use of the caveat in the 1976 circular, which sets out clearly that exceptions to the rule relating to any development in national parks should be taken only if — I quote yet again that sentence—

"there is compelling need which would not be met by any reasonable alternative means."

A great deal of detailed evidence was submitted on this point to the inquiry, which ran for 96 days during 1979 and 1980. One of the arguments in support of the northern route, which was deployed then and which has been made forcibly by hon. Members today, is that because the countryside to the north of Okehampton is apparently less dramatic than it is to the south, a northern route would be less environmentally damaging, but I do not believe this.

The hon. Members for Aberdeen, North and for South Shields challenged the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the northern bypass would take nine years to construct, while the timetable for the southern route to be completed is three years. Any choice of the various different routes to the north would take at least nine years. When my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport said recently that it could be 13 years, she was taking the normal length of time for the building of a bypass. It would only be if great haste and considerable acceleration were used that a time scale of nine years would be right.

The truth of all this is that it displays the measure to which the argument is about people's perceptions and opinions. In my opinion, a route to the north would be more environmentally damaging as it would lead to greater visibility and more heightened noise, particularly for the people who live by Knowle Bridge.

Mr. Rost: Does my hon. Friend accept that in paragraph 28.18, of the summary of the inspector's report, he maintains that the southern route is more damaging environmentally?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend must accept that the debate is about balance of judgment. Whichever way we look at this, one can argue for either a northern or a southern route, but the argument for the southern route becomes more and more compelling.

It is plain to all that there would be disturbance whichever route the road took. A dual carriageway is not a small construction and will be seen and heard wherever it goes, but I must respond to some of the more fervid and romantic misconceptions about the southern route. It has been claimed, for example, that it would brutally slash the wooded slopes of Okehampton park and the medieval deer park about which we have heard today. The deer park was "disparked"—an odd word—in 1538. Since then, the only deer that has been seen is the occasional wild one grazing or passing through. The truth is that the road will be scarcely seen from the moor proper or the town below and the tree-planting proposals, wherever the trees are, which were outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, will help to hide it from any other normal viewpoint.

Similar allegations have been made about the destruction of the woods that surround the road up to Meldon quarry. Sometimes the woods are more creatively called the "Bluebell Woods". Alas, a trip to the woods will soon prove to the observer that the thick undergrowth and a poor management of trees have resulted in a rather unsightly area so that one requires a machete if one wishes to go into the woods.

Nevertheless, I do not under-estimate the importance of the feeling expressed by many concerned people. I emphasise that only two out of the 50 acres of that wood will be taken for the road. Equally, as my right hon. Friend emphasised, the environmental considerations are in the forefront of the Government's deliberations in the choice of the route for the bypass.

The inquiry inspector recognised that the 1976 circular is designed to test all the considerations that are relevant to each individual case. It is clear that national parks and

trunk roads do not make good bedfellows. It follows that new roads should avoid parks wherever possible. That is a principle that the Government endorse.

Outside the national parks, too, the importance given to environmental considerations in road planning decisions was well illustrated only two weeks ago when it was announced that the M40 extension near Oxford was to be diverted, at some cost, around Ot Moor and Bernwood forest to avoid damaging that valuable wetland and important habitat for threatened species such as the black hairstreak butterfly.

However, the circular also recognises that on some rare occasions other factors must be taken into account and treated on their merits. Any other principle would surely prove to be intolerably inflexible. All decisions must be set within a framework of clear and strong planning policies. However, to argue, as hon. Members have today, that the Government draw up circulars and then ignore them when it suits them is simply not true. Policy circulars are statements setting out planning objectives and weighing the arguments to allow the ends to be achieved. They are not, and never can be, absolute, categorical, binding statements that such and such a development will never be allowed or, conversely, will always be allowed. Successive Administrations, including the former Labour Government, when they promoted the southern routes around Okehampton in 1976 following public consultation, have taken that line.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) made it clear how strongly my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) feels about the matter. It is his constituents who have been in the forefront of his mind throughout the long time that he has represented that seat. It is his constituents about whom he is thinking when he urges the House to look carefully at the decision that it makes tonight, hoping against hope that it will adhere to common sense and take the correct route.

The criticism that the Government used delaying tactics in reaching a decision on the report of the Joint Committee is nonsense, as is the belief of one organisation that a northern route road would take only two years longer to build.

I know that not everyone will agree with our decision. It was a painful choice. No one is suggesting that the countryside south of Okehampton is not beautiful Devonshire countryside. Of course it is. It is certainly not a wilderness, and when people write in defence of the last wilderness left in southern England, it merely serves to show that they have never been there.

There are those who argue that Okehampton is a test case, but that ignores the fact that following the same inquiry a section of the A30 that currently runs through the national park is to be detrunked and routed outside as a direct result of the policy, which the Government adhere to, in the 1976 circular.

I conclude by reminding the House that the people of Okehampton have been waiting a long time for their bypass. The Government believe that now is the time to provide it in the best possible situation and as quickly as may be. I hope that hon. Members will share that view and the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West and support the Bill.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 247, Noes 127.

Division No.7] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard

Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Archie Hamilton

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Benn, Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parris, Matthew
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rost, Peter
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stott, Roger
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Heat-Treated Milk

10.12 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's unnumbered explanatory memorandum dated 26th June 1985 on health and animal health problems affecting intra-community trade in heat-treated milk; endorses the view that trade in heat-treated milk should be subject to a Community regime in order to protect human and animal health; and therefore welcomes Council Directive No. 85/397/EEC of 5th August 1985 on health and animal health problems affecting intra-community trade in heat-treated milk.

This evening's debate is, in a sense, a repeat performance of the one that we had when heat-treated milk was discussed on 20 February 1975.

It is the purpose of the United Kingdom to encourage the extension of the open market within the European Community so that we can compete with our products, not least agricultural products.

In 1975, when we first discussed the issue, our agriculture was still adapting to the common agricultural policy — a process which is now complete. This has brought problems to the industry and, recently, to the dairy sector in particular, but there have also been opportunities for British agriculture and for the many people in Britain whose jobs depend on agriculture.

When we entered the European Community, we looked forward—we accepted it at the time—to a long period in which we would be getting the technical arrangements right and so harmonise our agriculture that we could break down the technical barriers and be able to export to the rest of Europe. With milk, those changes have taken rather longer. As a result, national health and hygiene regimes have remained in force in the United Kingdom and in other member states. It is important that the health standards, which for so long have been a guarantee of the purity of British milk, should remain in force and that we should allow milk to be imported into this country only if its standard can be compared with out own.

A number of legal proceedings were taken against member states, including Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland. The Commission took the United Kingdom to the European Court in 1981 on the subject of UHT milk. More recently, the Commission has initiated proceedings against the United Kingdom on pasteurised milk. In its UHT defence, and in correspondence relating to pasteurised milk, the United Kingdom argued that the problems posed by different national regimes should not be left to the courts, but should be solved by the establishment of Community-wide rules governing the production and processing of milk. This would ensure in particular that the trade did not threaten public or animal health in importing member states.

We continue to believe that we should have the opportunity to compete with other nations in the European Community. However, that competition should be based on the same high standards for milk as we have pioneered in this country and of which we are proud. We want to have the opportunity to compete, but the competition must be within the health regulations that are so important to us.

In 1983, therefore, the United Kingdom welcomed indications that work on a Community regime, which had been in abeyance for five years, was to be resumed. Work proceeded under the Greek presidency, and subsequently under French, Irish and Italian chairmanship. Agreement was finally reached during the first month of the Luxembourg presidency, on 16 July 1985.

Our objective throughout the negotiations was very simple. It was to ensure that imports under a Community regime would not undermine our high health and hygiene standards.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The right hon. Gentleman is making a meal of it.

Mr. Gummer: It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to make jokes about the quality of milk in this country. He always reduces serious matters to jokes. I hope that his constituents will note that a joke of this kind about their health is part of his stock in trade. It was important, therefore, to ensure that the health of our population——

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I follow precisely my right hon. Friend's point that the health of the people of this country is vital and that milk makes a very significant contribution to that. Is it, or is it not, true that the people of Paris have to boil their milk, pasteurised or not, before they drink it?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is not very keen on foreigners, but we have ensured by these provisions that milk will be allowed to be imported into this country only from those countries whose standards of health are similar to our own. That applies equally to imported meat. We have always been concerned about ensuring the health of the British people. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that I am the last person who would want to cause health difficulties for him or for his children over imported foods.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): The right hon. Gentleman has referred on a number of occasions to the health of the nation. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), is sitting beside him, can he explain why the Scottish Office has introduced an amending regulation to remove two Scottish firms from the need to produce heat-treated milk? If the health of the nation is so important, including the health of the people of Scotland, why are they not being made to adhere to the heat-treated provisions which the Minister is seeking to introduce tonight?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not like to be misinterpreted. He meant that the whole discussion was about cream. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] It is important to be accurate about these matters. The hon. Gentleman also knows that there is to be a debate on this issue. We are discussing a very serious matter, and it is odd that the Opposition should not be concerned about the health of the nation.

Mr. Foulkes: Get on with it.

Mr. Gummer: It has taken the Government a great deal of time to win this battle in the European Community and to get so satisfactory an answer. The least the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) can do is listen to us while we discuss the health of the people. It is interesting to note that he objects to the intervention of his colleague the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), for it is that hon. Gentleman, not this side of the House, who has held us up.

[Mr. Gummer]

I should like to deal in some detail with the provisions of the directive. Its purpose is to lay down detailed public health and animal health requirements for the production and processing of heat-treated milk and the procedures that must apply when it is traded between member states. Although some of those matters are dealt with in individual articles, the most important provisions are in the chapters of annex A. These are the conditions that must be met on the production holding. They are similar in effect to our milk and dairy regulations which govern conditions on the farms in this country. Indeed, some of the wording of this chapter was provided by my Department.

Part C refers to a code of hygiene governing milk practice. This has still to be drawn up, and we shall be active in ensuring that its provisions are acceptable to the United Kingdom. Our purpose throughout has been to ensure that there is fair competition between countries meeting the same type of health regulations.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I hope that I am not interrupting the Minister ungraciously, but he appears to be skipping article 3A. Under "Originating herd", chapter VI of the directive states:

"The untreated milk must come from cows . . .
(e) yielding at least two litres of milk a day".

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that our dairy industry was prosperous until the Conservative party came to office? We would not normally assume that a cow in Britain would produce only two litres a day, except at the end of her milking career.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that that would not normally be the measurement. We have laid down provisions which, if they are properly followed, will protect the health of our people. That is what we are about. It is odd that the hon. Gentleman objects to circumstances when a cow produces a small number of litres a day. What is important is not the number of litres, but whether that milk is healthy. The hon. Gentleman should not make that kind of point. No doubt other hon. Members will observe that chapters V and VI — I am happy for the hon. member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) to make a speech in which he can cover those matters——

Mr. Hardy: No.

Mr. Gummer: —include columns headed "Step 1" and "Step 2". This is the important point about this proposal. These provisions make a significant change in what might previously have been thought to be the type of regulations that were to be laid down.

During the negotiations it became clear that the high standards that the United Kingdom wanted to see in the directive could not be achieved by all member states, and this threatened to deadlock the attempt to have a Europe-wide decision. We have achieved a major breakthrough. There will be two successive stages — step 1, incorporating standards that all member states could achieve, and step 2, incorporating standards achieved by a minority of member states, including the United Kingdom.

When the directive comes into effect on 1 January 1989, step 1 standards will apply to begin with, but the higher step 2 standards will be progressively introduced —first, in respect of milk for direct human consumption, on 1 April 1990, and then in respect of all milk, on 1 January 1993 or possibly 1 January 1995. I hope that the House will note that point. It means that we shall be able to have trade within the Community among those countries which have the higher standards, from the point at which they have them. It is Britain's influence within the Community that will have raised the health and milk standards.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): How near is the United Kingdom's industry to achieving step 2 standards? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is to the advantage of the United Kingdom's industry to go to step 2 standards sooner rather than later, and not wait until the starting dates set out in article 16?

Mr. Gummer: Step 2 standards have already been achieved by a few states, including ourselves. Our industry will not have to make changes to meet those standards, but other countries will because they are not yet universal within the Community. That is one of the achievements that we have sought to bring about by our membership of the Community. We have sought to raise the European standards where they are higher in this country, and to provide fair competition. We should not be defensive about that. We should be proud that that is what we have achieved in the negotiations.

That provision recognises our higher standards and obliges others to meet them in due course, but it would have left the United Kingdom exposed to imports of lower quality milk during the transitional period. Our prime objective was to ensure that that could not happen.

At the meeting of Agriculture Ministers on 16 July this year, our partners finally accepted that member states already applying step 2 microbiological standards to their domestic products should be entitled to apply those standards to imports without any transitional period. We can therefore apply our standards to imports, and ultimately they will become the Community's standards.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Will my right hon. Friend clarify the position on double pasteurisation? As I understand it, that is prevented in inter-Community trade. That process is forbidden in Scotland and Ulster, but is allowed in England and Wales. Will he clarify the Government's intentions?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that the fact that double pasteurisation is allowed in England and Wales, but not in the north of Ireland and Scotland, shows that there is some argument about its precise purpose. Because we want to meet the needs of the industry, we have agreed that before making the final regulations under the directive we shall further consult the industry to decide whether double pasteurisation should be banned in the rest of the United Kingdom, or whether we should continue to allow it. Double pasteurisation is important. It is linked to some of the health problems that have been mentioned by the Milk Marketing Board.

Mr. Foulkes: Read on.

Mr. Gummer: I shall read as much as is necessary to clarify this important matter. Given the health standards, it was obviously a major concession to the United Kingdom for the rest of the Community to accept that we had a standard which the Community wished ultimately to impose upon the whole of the Community. We explained

that in a letter to the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee. That is why my right hon. Friend decided that, in the national interest, he had to agree to the directive, notwithstanding the recommendation that the draft should be debated. I hope that hon. Members, whatever view they have, will agree that it was clearly a successful negotiation. It was right for us to agree rather than to allow the matter to continue in abeyance.

The directive takes effect on 1 January 1989. It provides for trade to be strictly controlled. Exporting member states will be required to certify that individual consignments comply with all the provisions of the directive. Certificates will be carefully checked on arrival in this country. If there are grounds for suspicion, individual consignments will be held for testing, and milk may be turned back if necessary. In case of disagreement, reference may be made to the Commission.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful for the fact that the Minister is now on the main subject. Which ports will be designated as entry ports? Clearly not every port will have the right facilities or the people qualified to deal with the work that he has been describing.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman was perhaps wrong to suggest that the standards of health are not as important as the point to which he refers. Milk will be able to come through all those ports which are open to milk delivery. It will not be as for the UHT arrangements. There will be an open opportunity for milk to come in. If the amount of milk that comes in corresponds with the amount that comes in under the UHT arrangements, I doubt whether many ports will make much money out of it.

After all the worries that were expressed when we talked about UHT, the actual amount of milk that ultimately came in was small. *[Interruption.]* It really is a miserable life for members of the Opposition. First of all, they complained before we did it that it would be disastrous, ghastly and awful. Then we did it and UHT accounts for just 0·03 of the liquid milk market. Then they say, "Of course, it will get worse." It is terrible being a member of the Labour party, because things are always going to get worse. Given the fact of its history and experience, I understand why Opposition Members feel that way.

The industry is happy about the proposals we have put forward. Of course, people would prefer not to have competition: that is the nature of any of us. The industry is happy with the proposals and feel that we are protecting the health of the nation in a proper way. The proposals will enable us to have the kind of competition and opportunities that we expect from the European Community.

I accept that hon. Members are concerned about the economic implications — a concern expressed by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley— of allowing imports of pasteurised milk, whether as a result of the directive or as a result of court proceedings. I recognise that there is special concern about doorstep deliveries. That is a service which is highly valued, both by the consumer and by the large number of people employed in it. No one is a greater supporter of that than I am. It is part of our national life and a system which we recognise. We feared or we were told we ought to fear that it would be undermined by the changes made earlier on. That has not been the case, and I do not believe it will be the case. There is no question of undermining the doorstep delivery service. It will continue because the consumer likes it.

It works because people want it and it will continue to work.

I recall the fears expressed when arrangements were made some two years ago to allow the import of UHT and sterilised milk. Those fears have proved groundless. As I have mentioned, the total amount is 0·03 per cent. of the liquid market, and quite a lot of that is small catering packs of the kind that have nothing to do with doorstep deliveries. This is not going to be a worry. If that is not a worry with UHT one would not expect it to be a worry with pasteurised fresh milk which is liable to go off much more quickly than longlife milk.

These factors will work in favour of the domestic product and will allow our industry to compete effectively against imports. Already we have had people requesting information about how they might use the opportunities to export to other members of the European Economic Community. We have consulted with great care the National Farmers Union, the Milk Marketing Board and the Dairy Trade Federation, and their opposite numbers in Scotland and Northern Ireland. They accepted that, faced with legal proceedings and with the position in the Community, our best course was to negotiate for a directive. In general, this directive has been widely accepted as meeting all the requirements. There is no major issue on which those bodies feel we have failed them in our negotiations.

I hope that the House will feel that this motion is worth endorsing and that it is an opportunity rather than a threat for British trade. It is another example of how the European Economic Community can work for the benefit of us all.

10.35 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I welcome the Minister to our debates. Some kind souls have suggested that he has been demoted. I believe that responsibility for one of the largest industries in this nation is extremely important, and I sincerely congratulate him on his appointment.

I thank the Minister for his explanation of our future trade in heat-treated milk. As he acknowledged, this measure will eventually open all our ports to imports of pasteurised milk. As most of the liquid milk sold in the United Kingdom is heat treated, the House should recognise the possible scale of the impact of this measure on our dairy industry, and especially on our doorstep delivery system.

The final stage of the operation will be in January 1993. I was surprised to hear the Minister refer to 1995, and perhaps he could explain that. The major part of the measure will be implemented in January 1989. That is still three years away, but we must not be complacent about that. I hope that the House, the Minister and the industry are aware of the implications of the measure.

In a sense, the pass was sold in 1983 when the Government accepted imports of UHT milk. It is relevant to consider some of the issues raised in the debate on that——

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The judgment of the European Court makes it clear that the pass was sold many years before 1983, when the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) sold the pass with UHT cream.

Mr. Home Robertson: The decision was taken in this House by this Government. I remember trying to take part in the debate, but I failed to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is when the pass was sold.

Many of us were acutely concerned that imports of UHT milk at artificially low prices would flood into British supermarkets and wreck our excellent doorstep delivery system. As the Minister said, that has not come to pass. We usually doubt the judgment of the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker). However, when he was Minister he said that French UHT milk was disgusting and that his dog would not drink it. Even if we cannot trust the judgment of the right hon. Gentleman, we have at least accepted the judgment of his dog, and the UHT bonanza in our supermarkets has not materialised.

It would be interesting to consider what has happened with UHT imports. During the first half of 1985, about 900 tonnes—only 40 containers—of UHT and sterilised milk entered Britain. As the Minister said, the importers' share of the British market is 0·03 per cent., and much of that is sterilised skimmed milk from Belgium.

There are one or two interesting elements in that tiny share of British trade. A major contract is between British Airways and a German supplier of catering portions of UHT milk. If British Airways wants us to fly the flag, it should pay more attention to the flag on the milk that it serves to its passengers.

It is not only British Airways that buys this milk. *Agra Europe* stated on 26 April:

"the UK Minister of Agriculture, Michael Jopling, seems to have allowed his Ministry in London to put him in rather an embarrassing position. Not content with cancelling the daily milk delivery to his Whitehall Place offices, the Ministry, supplied through the Department of the Environment, has been caught buying in imported UHT milk for its Horseferry Road offices where a large proportion of London-based Ministry staff work . . . The matter is compounded further since it is understood that Ministry officials were aware some time ago that this use of imported supplies was taking place yet measures to change the arrangements do not appear to have been taken."

That is no big thing, but perhaps people buying milk might usefully watch for the weasel words "standardised whole milk" on packages because I understand that that means that the milk has been imported.

Of course, we recognise that consumers could benefit from a more competitive market. Competition comes in various forms and we are determined that the long-term security of the British dairy industry should not be put in jeopardy by any measure taken by this or any other Government. That includes the need to look after the long-term interests of dairy farmers as well as of the dairy trade.

I understand that the Dairy Trade Federation, the National Farmers Union, the Milk Marketing Board and the Consumers Association all support the measures, subject to understandable safeguards. It says much for the confidence of the dairy industry and dairy farmers that they feel that they can cope with the type of competition that is involved. I hope that the Minister is right in expressing the hope that they succeed in exporting dairy produce in due course. They have had a tough time over the past year with the imposition of dairy quotas and they are entitled to expect proper policing of any import trade. I hope that we will get undertakings to that effect tonight.

There must be power to enforce the provisions for the standard of imported milk. That is vital not only in fairness to British producers, whose standards are second to none, as the Minister has acknowledged, but to protect public health and our fine animal health record.

I am not 100 per cent. confident that the terms of the directive provide adequate safeguards. For example, article 5(1) says:

"Each Member State shall draw up a list of its approved milk-treatment establishments and, in so far as they are concerned with intra-Community trade in heat-treated milk, a list of approved collection centres and standardization centres, each such establishment or centre having an approval number. The Member States shall send those lists to the other member States and to the Commission.

No Member State shall approve an establishment or centre unless compliance with this Directive is assured."

So far, so good. But in article 5(3) we find that enforcement action against defaulters from such standards is far from straightforward:

"Where a Member State considers in particular after carrying out a check or inspection provided for in Article 7(1) and (2), that the provisions governing approval are not being, or have ceased to be, observed in an establishment or centre in another Member State, it shall inform the competent central authority of that State accordingly."

It says "inform"; there is no enforcement at that stage:

"That authority shall take all necessary measures, which may include the withdrawal of approval,"—

may, not shall—

"and notify the competent central authority of the first Member State of the decisions taken and the reasons for such decisions."

I could continue. There seem to be many ways out——

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): The hon. Gentleman has referred to difficulty about the enforcement procedure. if he reads article 7, he will see that a member state that is concerned about the purity of the milk has a right to reject the consignment.

Mr. Home Robertson: It can reject individual consignments, having tested them, but having identified from one consignment that there is a source of milk which is of doubtful hygiene, it still has to continue testing every consignment. If it is established that milk being imported is not up to the requisite standard, it should be possible to take action to prevent further imports from that source.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *rose*——

Mr. Home Robertson: I want to get on.

I could quote as many details as the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) likes, but obviously a protracted process will be necessary to try to deal with the problems. the machinery for blocking sources of potentially unhealthy milk is ponderous. it is wide open to manipulation, litigation and prevarication. That is a matter for legitimate concern.

I move from the question of human health to that of animal health and the emotive subject of foot and mouth disease. Article 12 says:

"A Member State may take the following measures with due regard for the general provisions of the Treaty:

(a) in the event of an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in another Member State, it may temporarily prohibit or restrict the introduction into its territory of pasteurized milk obtained in an approved establishment which collects untreated milk in the protection area".

I do not want any ifs or buts about this issue. If there is an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in any member state, Britain should be empowered to stop all further imports from that source until that member state is declared clear. I pointed out that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was using UHT milk imported from Germany earlier this year. There was an

outbreak of foot and mouth in Germany during last year. Powers to control such trade should exist. May we have clear undertakings from the Government on that?

An interesting detailed point was raised by the Select Committee on European Legislation. There seems to be some question about the origins of the powers under which the directive has been implemented. It seems that they date back to 1972, according to the Select Committee's memorandum. That suggests that the whole package could be challenged in the European Court at a future date. I trust that the Government are satisfied on that count.

I wish to press the Minister on the question of the relationship between this directive and the case which is currently before the European Court concerning the present ban on pasteurised milk imports into the United Kingdom on health grounds. We support that ban because of the overriding need to protect public health and maintain our excellent record on animal health.

The timetable set out in this directive is acceptable to the trade, and I am sure that it will be acceptable to hon. Members. That timetable will provide time for prospective exporters in other countries to bring their health and hygiene standards up to those now in effect in the United Kingdom, and it gives us time to satisfy ourselves that that has been achieved.

I am worried lest any decision by the European Court to speed up that timetable by overruling the present ban on imports into the United Kingdom before January 1989 could cause problems. Indeed, it could be a potential threat to public and animal health in this country. The Government will lodge their defence at the European Court next week and, as I said, we support them. However, in view of this agreed package, the directive should render redundant the court action that is being taken by the Commission against the United Kingdom. It would be absurd if this agreed timetable, based on clearly understood health standards, were to be superseded by an accelerated timetable imposed by the European Court.

We still have misgivings about the general proposal of unrestricted trade in milk, but we recognise that this is probably as good a package as the Government could hope to get in present circumstances. We shall accept the motion on the clear understanding that the Government will give top priority at all times to the protection of the health of our people and our livestock and on the further understanding that the Government will be prepared to take all necessary steps to ensure fair trading conditions for the British dairy industry.

10.48 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I am sure that the House welcomes the qualified welcome that the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) gave the directive. The directive presages an important change in the law and practice in the United Kingdom. As from 1989, pasteurised milk from EC countries can be admitted. The converse is also true—we will be able to export pasteurised milk to EC countries.

I hope that the dairy industry regards this as a challenge. The House is entitled to take some comfort from the fact that the Dairy Trade Federation has given the directive qualified support, as has the Milk Marketing Board. The United Kingdom dairy industry should regard this as an opportunity to export milk. The Government have given British agriculture considerable encouragement to export its products. I hope that the industry will take advantage of the directive to dispose of some of the surpluses, that will no doubt exist, by selling into Europe.

The directive constitutes a threat as well as a challenge. It could threaten health. I had the privilege of serving on the Select Committee on Agriculture in the previous Parliament. Although most French producers operate in circumstances similar to those found here — the co-operatives of Normandy produce to a very high standard — some of the milk produced abroad do not comply with the high health standards rightly required of United Kingdom producers. We must therefore envisage the possibility of milk that does not comply to our standards being imported.

That hazard is accentuated by our having surpluses. It would be surprising if EC producers did not try to export to the United Kingdom milk that does not comply with the standards that we rightly require of our producers. It is important that the Government use articles 5 and 7 rigorously. The hon. Member for East Lothian had some criticisms of article 5, which I thought a slightly unfair. Although the machinery is somewhat cumbersome it is certain in that imposes mandatory duties on the central authority to comply with the directive.

The Government must be willing to use article 7 rigorously. If they make it clear to EC producers that article 7 will be invoked and rigorously applied when necessary, the risk of dumping or of unhygienic milk being imported will be reduced dramatically.

This is a desirable step forward. It is a challenge for the United Kingdom industry. I hope that the consequences of that challenge will be beneficial in terms of price and service.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend and I had an interesting discussion with our hon. Friend the Minister about UHT milk, little of which is coming in. This is a different commodity as it tastes like milk and not like the other stuff.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): What is the other stuff?

Mr. Marlow: UHT. My hon. Friend the Minister said that the milk we are discussing is more perishable and therefore less marketable. Would my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) give his impression of how the directive will affect imports to the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend asks what effect the importation of pasteurised milk will have on the United Kingdom. I doubt whether too great a volume will be imported because the product is perishable. If it is imported in substantial quantities, the chances are that the result will be beneficial. The United Kingdom industry has the advantage of being on site. I do not see why the United Kingdom industry should not be able to meet the challenge, both in terms of price and service. I suspect that if there is a serious attempt to import quantities of pasteurised milk from the EEC into the United Kingdom, that threat will be met by our producers with improved services and prices. The consequence will therefore be beneficial.

This is a challenge to which the United Kingdom dairy industry can properly rise, and it is to be welcomed. There

[Mr. Hogg]

are such problems as hazards to health and dumping, but they can be properly met by invoking the provisions of articles 5 and 7.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): We now realise that the hon. Gentleman is a strong advocate of the export to the EEC of milk from this country. Is it not about time that we should try to export more of our milk products to other countries outside the EEC?

Mr Hogg: One is always in favour of exporting. The hon. Gentleman knows much about agriculture, and he must bear in mind the fact that milk products other than UHT ones have a fairly limited shelf life. Therefore, the ability to export, rather than in dried or UHT form is limited. If the hon. Gentleman is saying that we should encourage the export of agricultural products——

Mr. Marlow: Like cheese and butter.

Mr. Hogg: Those are good cases, but there is an international surplus in them, so there is a difficulty about exporting.

The Government have a fine record of encouraging the export of agricultural products, and we should give further emphasis to that. To the extent to which the directive encourages that, there is an additional reason to welcome it.

10.56 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): We welcome the motion only on the basis of the points that I shall make. First, we must have proper enforcement of standards for heat-treated milk to protect the health of humans and animals. There are arguments in favour of the United Kingdom standards being vigorously defended in the contest against the ban in the European Court. Before and after the directive is implemented, the United Kingdom milk industry must be committed to an aggressive approach in the market place. It is vital that our milk is marketed aggressively in the next three years, before the pasteurised imported milk comes in. We can afford no complacency whatsoever on this issue.

Our farmers have a great deal at stake, particularly after the difficult times over the past two or three years. The value of the milk industry to the United Kingdom is considerable — some £2·7 billion, with 75,000 people employed in it. Any undermining of it would put us in a serious situation.

Therefore, we must do all that we can to ensure that the health requirements, both human and animal, are strictly adhered to. There must be no wavering by the Government. We require absolute assurances and undertakings from the Minister on these issues.

Why has not the directive been brought to Parliament before? It was before the Council of Ministers on 15 and 16 July. There is a need for assurance that these products will be properly tested at the Channel ports and that there are sufficient personnel available to do it. The policing of the entry of these products must be rigorous. We have already seen what has happened as a result of the reduction of customs officers dealing with other imported products, and we do not want that to happen in this case.

We must also consider the probability of a fixed link under the Channel coming in at a similar time as the final part of the regulation comes into being. How will the fixed link be policed? How will the Minister ensure that the testing is adequate?

Mr. Marlow: This is an important debate, and it is interesting that the fixed link has been brought into it. Is the hon. Gentleman speaking on behalf of the Liberal party, or the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party? When he speaks, does he always speak on behalf of the Liberal party, or the Liberal party and the SDP? What is the view of the Liberal party on the Channel tunnel?

Mr. Livsey: Tonight I am speaking on behalf of the alliance.

There will be an awkward situation in relation to the fixed link and in ensuring that the testing is adequate. We want to be reassured about that.

When considering the European Court case, we trust that the Government will be firm in insisting that we proceed under the timetable in the directive, and that that first step will not take place until 1 January 1989. The European Commission has no case to answer in referring our ban to the court. How can we implement the directive in any case until that timetable has been gone through?

There is an important environmental case to be made about the importing of pasteurised milk. Reference to tankers is made in the directive, but tonight we have not discussed the probability of milk coming into this country in disposable cartons, whereas most of our milk is delivered on the doorstep in milk bottles. Will such disposable cartons come in? Will we do something about their control? How will we test the milk coming in in individual cartons? Will proper testing be carried out? We must ensure that the labelling of the milk is recognisable to the consumer——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The label has "milk" on it.

Mr. Livsey: ——showing whether the milk has been imported. With Spanish, French or Dutch milk coming in, will the labels show the country of origin? It is most important that it is recognisable.

On the continent it is common practice to mix milks and add butter fat. Therefore, we must ensure that there is adequate labelling stating what type of milk it is — whether it has added butter fat or is mixed milk of different origins. Hon. Members have said how important doorstep deliveries are. We know that our own silver top milk has not been tampered with; it is natural milk. Some of the milk coming in from the continent will be of a mixed type. Standardised milk must be labelled as such and there must be adequate food labelling whether it is for milk or other foods. That is extremely important.

I hope that the Minister will ensure that we receive assurances on these points in spite of the difficulties that Government Members have given me while I have been speaking. I hope that the Minister will answer my points and will give me assurances on them.

11.7 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I hope that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) will forgive me if I do not comment on his speech.

It is rare to receive three representations on a matter such as this—from the Milk Marketing Board, the Dairy Trade Federation and the National Farmers Union. These

representations are essentially complimentary and constructive and generally set out a position of contentment.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and his predecessor, who is now Chief Secretary to the Treasury in penance for his success at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I pay tribute also to the Ministry's team because these agreements are constructed on hours of patient work by those behind the scenes who gradually put the bits together and eventually produce a whole package, and not on diktat. This is an occasion for compliments just as it is an occasion for the recognition of a challenge, as set out by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). We have a confidence in milk which we take for granted. That confidence has been built up over the years. It stems from the fact that we do not become sick from drinking milk, and when we receive it on our doorsteps it is in good nick, being fresh and wholesome. That is a proud track record for the industry, which in some of its manifestations has made representations to us. That is the base from which we must work at all times, as we progress to 1989 and on to 1990 and 1993.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will be kind enough to bring us up to date on the state of play in the present court case. It would be wrong for us to be at a disadvantage at any time before 1989, when everybody else will have, or should have, his act in order. We do not want to be the only ones playing the game.

I was reassured by the reply of my right hon. Friend the Minister to my earlier intervention on the question of step 2—I must say that the jargon is frightful. Nevertheless, I think that the public will be reassured that our standards are so high. I shall prod my right hon. Friend slightly on double pasteurisation which some hon. Members have already mentioned. It is a valid and important issue. When we debated the matter of UHT milk prior to 1983 it was made clear that two important aspects of milk were the microbiological content and the solid content. It was clearly stated that there was documented evidence of solids creeping into milk on the continent. I have seen milk being taken to dairies on the continent on the back of bicycles, and I want to ensure that there are no undesirable manurial solids entering our milk.

The directive provides clearly that there should be single pasteurisation for intra-Community trade, but there is a loophole that allows the doubling up of pasteurisation. That means that we could receive milk which has been pasteurised unsatisfactorily and repasteurised in Britian. The repasteurisation will deal with microbiological considerations but not those directed to solid content. I advocate strongly that we close the loophole, unify the procedures and make it clear that we do not agree with double pasteurisation because of the attendant risks.

There are some who are concerned about the long-term effect on the liquid milk premium of the measures that are before us. We do not know yet how much spare milk is floating around the Community, and nor do we know how attractive it will be to have that milk directed towards the liquid milk market in the United Kingdom The liquid milk premium could be a positive disincentive for the United Kingdom industry. I cannot find anyone in the industry who is able to address himself to the issue, but I should like to know that it is being considered. Is there a case for reconsidering the marketing strategy for milk in the United Kingdom as a consequence of full intra-Community trade?

I underline the remark of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham that the United Kingdom dairy industry is faced with a challenge. The constructive way in which the problem has been approached gives one confidence that we shall see a strong United Kingdom dairy industry in future that is able to take advantage of its internal sales opportunities and external opportunities. I hope very much that the industry will proceed in that direction.

11.12 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) for his indulgence in allowing me to say a few words from the Back Benches. I have a double interest in the matter. First, like my hon. Friend, I represent a rural constituency, and there are not too many of my right hon. and hon. Friends in that position——

Mr. Home Robertson: Yet.

Mr. Foulkes: —although there will be after the next general election. Secondly, and equally important in this context, I am a Co-operative party sponsored Member. I hope that Conservative Members will recognise that Labour Members declare their interests, unlike some of them.

The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) was assailed and assaulted by Conservative rowdies—*[Interruption.]* I do not think that many of them have been drinking milk today. The hon. Gentleman received that treatment while quoting some statistics to show the importance of the dairy industry, and he was right to do so. It should be remembered that 33 million pints of milk are drunk every day and that 98 per cent. of householders use fresh milk. More important, 80 per cent. of that fresh milk is delivered daily to the doorstep. That is a unique and valuable service in which the Co-operative movement plays a great and important part.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way. Is it not a fact that in Scotland, which he represents, there are more bottles of milk in shops than on doorsteps?

Mr. Foulkes: I represent only part of Scotland, but Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley is a large constituency of about 800 sq miles. The hon. Gentleman is right to suggest that in England the Co-operative societies play an even greater part in delivering milk than they do further north. The hon. Gentleman described me as his hon. Friend in a moment of unparalleled generosity. As someone who has emigrated south, he will be aware of the situation on both sides of the border. Milk represents 9 per cent. of the retail food price index. That is a large percentage, and it is important to keep down the price of milk. It is the largest single item.

I have three points to make to the Minister. I assure him that I was not intending to imply that health aspects are not important when I made my sedentary intervention. I was anxious that he should get down to the nitty-gritty of the subject.

The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) talked about Britain exporting milk. As his hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) will tell him, we are now in a crazy situation. Because we have

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been adhering strictly to quotas while other countries have not, we are having to import milk products. We are now getting German cheddar in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The import of cheddar has nothing to do with quotas. Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House which countries have been flouting their quota allocations in such a ridiculous manner in the past year?

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister is in the best position to name them. I shall name them on another occasion, but it is not my immediate subject. *[Interruption.]* It appears that some hon. Members believe them to be the French and the Irish, but I shall leave that matter and deal with my three points.

First, I want to underline the point made by hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian concerning the court decision. If the court decision goes through, without these provisions we shall have unrestricted imports. The Minister did not seem to deal with the question in detail in his introductory remarks. I hope that he will deal with it in his reply.

My second point is the one that I raised in my intervention in regard to the ports. I do not believe that the Minister has thought about it. At least, he did not appear to have done so. It is inconceivable, as the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor said, that every port could have the right kind of facilities and the people properly qualified to check the certificates and be able to test the milk if that is necessary. It involves substantial skills and equipment, and I cannot see that it can be done in every port throughout the United Kingdom at which milk might enter.

My third point relates to enforcement. I wish to underline, on behalf of the Co-operative movement in particular, that the Dairy Trade Federation and the Co-operative movement are concerned about enforcement and wish to see it in operation all over Europe. I do not see how we can know exactly what is happening on every farm in every part of Europe, but we need to ensure that the system is being operated strictly in all the other countries, because it will not be possible to test all the consignments in every way.

Mr. Marlow: I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that it is very difficult to ensure that the rules and regulations are properly applied in European countries. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has been following the problems with olive oil in Italy. The supervision of the olive oil regime is carried out by the Italian authorities. They do it by using the co-operatives in Italy. The operation is a complete shambles. Similarly, how do we know that milk hygiene can be properly supervised in France? There are grave risks involved.

Mr. Foulkes: I must concede that I do not spend all my working hours studying the problems of the olive oil industry in Italy, but the hon. Gentleman's point should be borne in mind.

The Dairy Trade Federation, the Co-operative movement and others believe that if there were to be one serious illness as a result of a contaminated batch of milk arriving from the continent of Europe, it would harm not only the name of imported milk but that of milk generally, and could cause irreparable harm to our dairy trade in the United Kingdom.

I represent the Co-operative movement, which covers one quarter of the United Kingdom dairy trade. It is the only national dairy movement, and it has a very good record. It is socially committed and it is also run on commercial lines. It plays a very active part in the dairy trade as well as in the Dairy Trade Federation. The Co-operative movement welcomes the directive, save for the cautionary questions that I have asked on its behalf.

11.20 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) made a typically flamboyant speech, but he has raised a number of pertinent issues to which I hope my right hon. Friend the Minister of State will respond.

Reference has been made to the doorstep delivery. Every hon. Member believes that this is vital not only to the dairy trade but to the people of this country. It provides a social service which has been supported by all hon. Members for a very long time. Reference has also been made to animal and consumer health, both of which are very important. However, what concerns me most is the imminent hearing in the European Court.

The House is debating a directive that has been agreed by the Ministers of all the countries that comprise the European Community. Therefore, it is presumed that if it is passed by the Governments of all the members of the Community the contents of the directive will be binding upon all its members. However, I understand that a European Court decision might lead to a variation in the terms of the directive.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will say what the position is. In his opening speech he did not provide us with information which will enable us to decide whether the directive will be binding upon all Community members, or whether a European Court decision will vary the terms of the directive. If the decision of the European Court went against us and if the terms of the directive were thereby changed, we should be placed in a very difficult position. Once again the United Kingdom will be the fall guy.

The dairy industry is very important in my constituency. It is a very substantial employer. The milk quotas have caused considerable hardship. However, there has been considerable investment in the industry since quotas were introduced. It is vitally important for the United Kingdom, the Dairy Trade Federation, the Milk Marketing Board and the National Farmers Union to know where they stand, should the decision of the European Court go against them. I do not know whether my right hon. Friend will be able to answer this question, but it is the linchpin of the debate. We have referred to many other peripheral matters: to whether we shall be able to test and monitor adequately milk imports at the ports of entry. The basis of the directive is agreed by the Dairy Trade Federation, the Milk Marketing Board—with reservations—and the NFU. It would not be sensible for any hon. Member to disagree with bodies which do an excellent job in representing the diary trade in its widest context. They are deeply concerned about this court matter. The NFU states:

"The NFU supports the Government's defence of the Court case. We believe that pasteuriifed milk imports are only acceptable if rigorous hygiene standards have been applied to the milk and if the competition is fair."

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will do his utmost to ensure that competition in the Community is fair to the United Kingdom. The NFU states:

"However, the EC Commission has initiated proceedings against the ban and if this case is lost it is possible that amendments will have to be made to the UK's milk importation regulations before the Directive comes into operation."

If that matter can be clarified, I believe that my right hon. Friend will carry the House with him in agreeing that the directive is acceptable. If that assurance can be given, I shall be happy to accept it. I believe that it will be beneficial.

11.26 pm

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): This subject has bedevilled the EEC for some years. It has illustrated the difficulty in dealing with EEC matters between those who have argued the classic position of the benefits that everyone can gain from free trade in goods and services and those who have argued about the need to protect national interests. By forcing our Government to take perfectly justifiable measures over some years to protect our national interests with respect to health and the importation of milk, other countries have been given a bargaining point and a basis upon which to impose their own restrictive measures. From that viewpoint, this has been a much more important measure than if it were seen only in the domestic context. It has provided the basis —in the political sphere, if in no other—for a trade-off of one restrictive measure for another. It has been important to resolve this issue.

The proposal is a relevant, clever and timely solution to the problem and hon. Members should be grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister. Will my right hon. Friend confirm the Government's intentions to apply some of the directive's provisions with the utmost rigour? I was comforted to see the preamble state:

"a Member State must be able to refuse entry into free circulation within its territory in the case of heat-treated milk from another Member State where it has been found that that milk does not satisfy the provisions of this Directive".

That appears to enshrine in the directive the measures that we have sought to take and for which we have been taken to the European Court.

The directive is a great step forward. It should provide great comfort to those who in the past have been unhappy about the basis on which milk products were introdueed into Britain. It provides our Government with a firmer basis on which to act to protect our citizens and consumers. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will emphasise that aspect and give further reassurance to our consumers based on this element in the directive.

Article 5 states:

"the Member States may be authorized . . . to prohibit provisionally the introduction into their territories of heat-treated milk from that establishment."

I think that that answers the point made by the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). It illustrates that there are ample provisions in the directive to enable prompt and effective action to be taken, should a Government decide to do so. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will emphasise that point so that we may all be even happier to lend our support to the measure and to give our assurances to the consumers.

It is in that spirit that I should like to add my voice to those of my colleagues who have welcomed this measure. I hope that it will now put behind us the futile and needless disputes of the past so that we can move foward to a regulated and controlled trade, to the benefit of all consumers.

Mr. Gummer: With persmission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to answer some of the questions that have been asked. If I miss any, I can write to the hon. Members involved.

I was rather surprised by the way in which the Opposition discussed this measure. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), who has not been without criticism of the way in which the European Community operates — I believe that I can say that without being unfair — has correctly said that the directive provides a good answer to a problem. I am sorry that the hon. Member for East Lothiam (Mr. Home Robertson) could not say the same. I am pleased that he said that our dairy farmers are confident, and I am sure that this is the result of knowing that they are represented by a Government who stand up for them. I am sure that they would not be as confident had they him in tow.

The second point that the hon. Gentleman mentioned was what he called an emotive and important issue. This issue does not need to be emotive. It should be logical. It is the attempt to include emotion which disfigured the Opposition's argument.

We have considered the problem logically and we have produced a logical answer. We shall enforce the arrangement with the vigour that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire would expect, and that is why we have insisted upon the points that he mentioned.

I was asked what bearing the directive would have on the court case. The Government had hoped that the Commission would withdraw its case when we reached what seemed to us to be the sensible answer. That is why we wanted this answer and fought for it. It is why we felt that there was no need for the case. The Commission has applied to the court and does not seem inclined to withdraw the case. We shall therefore defend the case with the vigour and rigour that my hon. Friends would expect. We have a strong argument, because whatever happens it would not be sensible to implement a short-term national arrangement before the Community's full arrangement comes into operation.

No one need worry that the court could affect the terms of an agreed directive. That cannot happen, but we do not want an untidy period between the court's decision and when the directive comes into effect. That is why we shall fight the case hard. We shall expect the court to listen carefully to our case, because it is right.

I agree with the anxiety about health felt by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). There is no question but that the Government believe that health is important. That is what I was saying when the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) interrupted me and complained that I went on about it. He then made it one of his three main points. It is a pity that he interrupted. Had he not interrupted, we could have got on more quickly.

I found some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) difficult to follow. I understood that the party that he represents is in favour of our membership of the European Community. Anyone present during the debate would have found that difficult to detect. I hope that he will sort out whom and which policies he represents. He first made a comment about

[Mr. Gummer]

enforcement, with which we would all agree. He then said that we had no reason to be complacent, and we then heard the usual worry that somehow everyone else would do well but we would not and how awful that would be. Why can we not say that our industry is good and one of which we are proud and that there is no reason why it cannot sell its products? Why should we constantly believe that other people are beating us? It seems to be part of the Opposition's stock in trade to write down our chances and to complain about our industry instead of showing that we have an opportunity to win.

We had an interesting argument about why the directive had not been brought to the House earlier. We could not discuss it during the summer recess and that was followed by the Queen's Speech, which many would say was marginally more important than this matter. The directive has been brought to the House about as quickly as it was possible for us to bring it forward. I am sure that when the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor has been here longer, he will not make such unfair comments.

Mr. Livsey: Condescending.

Mr. Gummer: That was not a condescending comment. It was meant to be a polite comment, but if the hon. Gentleman thinks that it was impolite, I shall withdraw it immediately.

The hon. Gentleman also talked about the fixed link. I must admit that at that point I was completely lost. I could not understand whether he was talking about the link between him and his SDP allies. That is the most unfixed link I know.

I cannot believe that the problems involved in the directive are made worse by any consideration of the nature of the Channel tunnel. The question is whether we can stand up to full, fair, decent competition. If the hon. Gentleman, who represents the Liberal party and its allies for the moment, fears that we cannot stand up to full and fair competition, he casts a gross calumny against the industry, which has said throughout that we can stand up to such competition.

Mr. Livsey: I referred to a fixed link in terms of a Channel tunnel link and all the problems that that will bring with it. It was a serious point which should be taken extremely seriously.

The points that I made were serious. Hon. Members may have had difficulty in hearing them because of the constant interruptions, particularly by the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who was trying to undermine my argument. I was making serious points and the Minister should take them in that spirit.

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to take the hon. Gentleman's point in the spirit of seriousness, but I do not believe it to be a serious point. I cannot understand what difference the fixed link makes. The issue is whether we can stand up to competition. The industry says that as long as the competition is fair and the health regulations are equal, we can stand up to that competition. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor should not claim to know better than the whole industry. I do not think that he does and I do not believe that the House thinks that he does.

The hon. Member also mentioned cartons. I had not previously gathered that Liberal policy was to ban cartons. If that is its policy, I hope that the Liberal party will discuss the matter with the SDP and with the dairy industry, which wishes to extend the market and not to tell consumers that they must have their milk in the package that the Liberal party thinks is good for them. That is paternalism gone mad. The hon. Gentleman should not come here with general comments about cartons, without having prepared his speech. That is not acceptable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) was kind enough to pay tribute to those in the Ministry who have carried the burden of the negotiations on the directive. As one who has only recently joined the Ministry, I associate myself with those comments. We have had a successful outcome to an extremely hard fought and important discussion.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and I take a different view about the European Community, but it is not fair to say that Britain is the fall guy on every issue. In this case, we have established the standards for the whole Community. Far from being the fall guy, we have led the Community into an improved position, and that is one of the purposes for which we joined and one of the reasons why we are proud to be a member.

It would be wrong for me to sit down without returning to the two other comments made by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley. He differs from the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), the Opposition spokesman on the subject, who is a farmer of considerable note and farms a substantial area.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): He has no cows.

Mr. Gummer: He certainly has land upon which cows could be grazed.

It is a staggering fact that we will allow the milk to come in, if it comes in, through the ports. We will allow it to come through those ports which are able to handle it, because it would be unlikely to come through ports that were not able to handle it. Every port is open to milk, but no doubt importers and exporters will choose ports that are best able to handle it. We have enough faith in the free market to believe that it can choose which ports to send its milk to.

The hon. Gentleman asked about enforcement. The comparison with the olive oil regime seemed extremely far-fetched. Opposition Members are supposed to belong to an international party. They sing "The Internationale" and yet everybody outside Britain produces — *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman enthused over the matter of——

Mr. Foulkes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gummer: No, I will not give way. We on the Government Benches show our internationalism by supporting with enthusiasm this directive. As usual, the Opposition side attack the foreigner whenever they meet him.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's unnumbered explanatory memorandum dated 26th June 1985 on health and animal health problems affecting intra-community trade in heat-treated milk; endorses the view that trade in heat-treated milk should be subject to a Community regime in order to protect human and animal health;

and therefore welcomes Council Directive No. 85/397/EEC of 5th August 1985 on health and animal health problems affecting intra-community trade in heat-treated milk.

Redundant Mineworkers' Payment Scheme

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

11.42 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): In my constituency I have one pit employing about 1,000 men, the central National Coal Board workshops at Swadlincote with over 200, and the internationally famous Mining Research and Development Establishment at Stanhope Bretby, with its associated test site at Swadlincote nearby. I can say that I have the brainiest miners in the country. The Mining Research and Development Establishment employs nearly 1,000 people, of whom approximately one third are industrial staff. My concern tonight is that they do not appear to be entitled to benefit from the Redundant Mineworkers' Payment Scheme as set out in Statutory Instrument 1984 (457) and other statutory instruments.

My hon. Friend is acquainted with the first class work at Bretby, and I believe that that was one of the first visits he made in September 1984 following his appointment as a Minister. He knows the details of the excellent work it is doing, for example, on dust control. It has just won the Queen's Award to Industry for the fourth time for its work on dust control. It has worked on MINOS, the system of electronic monitoring which has recently been installed at all the pits at Selby, on rapid improvements in coal carrying, on tunnelling, on coal preparation, on reduction of sulphur, and on research into acid rain. Development work is being done for the Chinese, and so on. There is a wide range of work being done there.

This nation owes a considerable debt to the work force there for, like their colleagues at the local pits, they worked throughout the strike and kept the midlands pits going. They have yet again enhanced the reputation of south Derbyshire people by their common sense and coolness in the face of considerable pressure. I am proud indeed to represent them all.

The work done by the industrial staff is to back up the scientists and engineers. Their job is to set up the rigs, to install them. This often involves underground working, and many of them have substantial underground experience. They are frequently working in dangerous or unpleasant circumstances underground—for example, on development work—or where there has been an accident or a stoppage of machinery. Any idea that they are just office or laboratory staff is a load of nonsense. They work alongside colliers underground, and they always have done. More important, their work is required because there are mines in this country, and for no other reason. If we had no mines, we would need no MRDE. All its other work is extra—a bonus and a tribute to its excellent work for our local pit men.

The RMPS has enhanced payments for National Coal Board employees made redundant as pits and ancillary locations close. It has gone through several variations and is currently the most generous redundancy scheme on offer in the United Kingdom. Men can leave with more than £30,000 in their pockets. The scheme was supported by Conservative Members, even though we are spending an awful lot of public money. I think that by the end of this year it will be about £1 billion on RMPS alone. We were conscious that many pits had to close and that they were

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frequently in areas where finding another job would be difficult. Such a sum for a man in his fifties facing a decade on the dole is not really so great. As a result, there has been a large number of voluntary redundancies—I think almost 30,000—and it has been the Government's proud boast that no one has been made compulsorily redundant from this industry.

To obtain payment, a man has to fulfil three conditions. First, he must be redundant; secondly, he must work at a prescribed pit under the Act; and, thirdly, his redundancy must have been the result of the closure of a pit or coking plant. During my inquiries I have been told repeatedly that MRDE is not a prescribed place under the statutory instrument. There is a long list of odd prescribed places, which includes such places as area offices and establishments, ambulance stations, coal laboratories, training centres, water works, timber impregnation plants, workshops, stores and plant pool depots, and even the granaries for the foodstuffs for the pit ponies. It appears that the pit ponies can obtain RMPS but that my constituents cannot.

The workshops at Swadlincote are clearly included, but the problem is that no redundancies have been offered. Although the men would like to leave with enhanced terms, there are some 50 vacancies, so the NCB's answer is no. I am repeatedly told that MRDE is not included. I cannot understand why it does not come under headquarters, but I have been told that that is not the case. I understand that the exclusion goes back to the 1947 Act when the NCB was created, but no one seems to know why.

If the third condition is the problem — that the payment is dependent on colliery closures—I say to my hon. Friend that if there are fewer collieries, there is less work for MRDE to do. That is axiomatic. In any case, the pressure of the costs of closures is causing pressure on the finances of MRDE, and that is now precipitating an urgent problem.

One result is that the vacancies at the workshops and any vacancies that come up at MRDE are proving very difficult to fill. The men, understandably, are reluctant to move from the pits that are closing — for example at Measham — to an establishment where the enhanced payments are not available. They feel that they are giving up large amounts of money and yet may still face redundancy at some point in the future. Therefore, they are refusing to go, the vacancies are there, and the position is not satisfactory.

Nor is it as if my constituents are very well paid. If they were, I would expect them to look after themselves. A standard week for a craftsman at the test site results in him bringing home about £106. I have seen pay slips with that figure. Permitted overtime is only four hours a month and they have to work long hours to collect £140 to £150 a week after stoppages. I should point out that the staff at MRDE have an enhancement scheme, much of which they pay for. This sort of thing really rankles with those who do not have that scheme.

Until recently, the question was a little academic at MRDE because the men wanted early retirement—one third of them are over 55 — but they wanted it with enhancement. However, no one faced real redundancy so they did not fulfil even the first condition of the three that I set out. In the last couple of months, however, that has changed. MRDE, the Swadlincote test sites and the workshops have come under one management. The workshops are likely to be sold and MRDE is likely to be forced to pay its way. More than 100 industrials are likely to be moved from Bretby to Swadlincote, and we have been told that there will probably be redundancies. Yet the men concerned are still excluded from RMPS.

I think that MRDE is a prescribed place. The changes there are, at least in part, the result of pit closures, and now I have people who will be made redundant. They face redundancy with only the statutory redundancy payments. I think they are being forgotten and left out simply because of an oversight from some 40 years ago.

Who will volunteer for redundancy on that basis? We may well see in my constituency the only compulsory redundancies in the whole of the National Coal Board. The men are well within their rights to refuse voluntary retirement on that basis.

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): The hon. Member was warned about it.

Mrs. Currie: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to say something? I will give way.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Perhaps the hon. Lady will give way to me. I have been listening to the figures which the hon. Lady has been giving to the House. I know that she would not want to mislead the House, although she is arguing her case very well. I got information this morning from John Whitby to the effect that Mr. G. Knight, head of the research and development centre at Bretby, called a meeting of the scientific and engineering staff, told them that in the coming year there will be a reduction in staff from 234 to 198 and announced cuts in expenditure from £18·6 million to £12·2 million. Those are not the figures that the hon. Lady has presented to the House.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He may also be aware that that may not be the end of the story, because our understanding is that MRDE will be required to break even in the near future. The figures he has mentioned are not at the break even point.

I want to make it clear, particularly to Opposition Members, that in my area it is not a party political matter. I am sure we share the same concern. We welcome some of the changes because the concentration of research and development and workshops in Swadlincote and Bretby is a major tribute to the quality of the work that they have been doing. Whereas workshops have been closing all over the country, I think that ours will be augmented and that I am likely to continue representing the brainiest miners for a very long time. That is a vote of confidence in our work force.

I understand that management would like to let quite a few of the men go, perhaps more than necessary, and take on juveniles. That might be a good thing. Many of my constituents have worked in the industry for 30 or 40 years at MRDE or have ended up there. Men are willing to retire. We have exactly the same problems in my area as there are everywhere else in finding jobs for young people. We need to bring down the average age of the people who are working in those establishments.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and I have been exchanging letters on the subject for nine months and have been getting no further. If my

interpretation of the law is correct, will my hon. Friend admit that it is an anomaly and perhaps consult the NCB chairman, whichever one it is, with a view to seeing whether we cannot look after my constituents better? If it will take primary legislation to put the matter right, can he ensure that it is done promptly? I am sure that Opposition Members agree that it could be done in the House in 10 minutes flat.

My concern is solely about an injustice to my constituents which may cause real hardship. It is now a matter of urgency and I ask my hon. Friend to see what he can do to put it right.

11.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) for raising this important issue. One of the most significant features of the last general election was the entry into the House of a substantial number of Conservative Members representing a large proportion of the mining industry. Since then, my hon. Friend has distinguished herself by strong and consistent advocacy on behalf of her mining constituents, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart), whom I am pleased to see here tonight. Tonight's debate is a further instance of the constant pressure which my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South brings to bear on behalf of her constituents. I acknowledge that.

I also have great pleasure in acknowledging the importance of Bretby. This was one of the first visits that I made following my appointment as Parliamentary Under-Secretary. I was very impressed by the work that I saw being carried out there. There is no doubt that this establishment has a world reputation second to none and has forged a partnership with the mining equipment industry which is outstanding in its effect and impact on new technology and techniques, in particular in long wall mining.

I had the opportunity a few weeks ago to visit Australia and to see for myself some of this modern equipment underground. There, 80 per cent. of all new long wall orders are won by British mining equipment companies. Also a few weeks ago, I saw similar equipment being used in Hungary. I had the opportunity to talk to a Trade and Industry Minister in Japan, and he acknowledged that the partnership between Bretby and the mining equipment industry had given British companies a world lead in this important field.

I endorse what my hon. Friend said about the courage of her constituents. In the comparative quite of the Chamber tonight, it is easy to forget the scenes of violence and intimidation last year when there were many individual acts of courage by miners in her constituency. They fought, not only for the right to work, but for the future of their industry, and we must never forget, as my hon. Friend termed it, their common sense and coolness.

As the coal industry goes through this period of restructuring and looks ahead to the future, I believe, as I have said many times from this Dispatch Box, that coal has a positive future and that, although there will be difficulties, with the spirit of the work force and the tremendous advances now being made in productivity, those difficulties will be overcome and that the long-term future for coal is one of expansion and not contraction.

Tonight we are considering the scope of the redundant mineworkers payments scheme, who is elegible for benefit and who is not, and first I shall recall the origins of the scheme. It was in the Coal Industry Act 1967 that the power to make schemes was originally introduced. The present scheme derives from the Coal Industry Act 1977, as amended.

My hon. Friend referred to the legislation. It reflects a recognition by successive Governments that in the circumstances of the coal industry, where pits which have been the mainstay of relatively isolated communities may need to close, bringing to an end the jobs of men who may have spent nearly a lifetime in the industry, there is a need to ensure that more than usually generous redundancy benefits are available.

The scheme has made available benefits beyond those which the NCB could itself be expected to finance and has enabled the board to maintain its policy of not making compulsorily redundant men who wish to stay in the industry. Despite what is happening throughout the industry, there is still no reason to expect any compulsory redundancies to take place.

The primary legislation lays down the fundamental requirements which any scheme must meet, and thus section 7 of the Coal Industry Act 1977 makes it clear that for a mineworker to be eligible for benefit, his redundancy must be in consequence of the closure of a mine, the reduction in the number of persons employed there or the consequent reduction in ancillary services. These requirements are repeated in the secondary legislation, which details the benefits available to men whose redundancy date falls between dates specified.

I shall draw to the attention of the House certain features of those requirements. They do not, and never were intended to, cover all those affected by job losses as a result of restructuring in the coal industry. There are many people in the industry whose jobs may end but who would never meet these conditions. For example, all non-industrial grades fall outside the scheme. Equally, the conditions are not linked to membership of any particular union, and the scheme is intended to cover only those people in industrial grades whose jobs go as a direct consequence of pit closures and related manpower reductions, and who therefore fall within the original raison d'être for introducing a special state-funded benefit scheme.

This is not to say anything about the redundancy terms which are or should be available to those in the coal industry whose jobs end but who fail to qualify for RMPS. That is a matter between those affected and their employer, as for employees in other industries. Rather it is to say, as successive Governments have accepted, that only in the special circumstances which the scheme was originally introduced to cover are the differences between the coal mining industry and other industries which may equally be faced with a need for restructuring sufficient to justify special state provision at the taxpayers' expense.

My hon. Friend has explained eloquently why she believes that some of her constituents, industrial workers at the NCB's former mining research and development establishment, now known as headquarters technical department, should be eligible for voluntary redundancy on RMPS terms. Either her constituents' jobs are ending as a direct consequence of closures or manpower reductions at collieries or they are not. There is no question

[Mr. David Hunt]

of her constituents having been arbitrarily excluded from receiving benefits simply because they work at the former mining research and development establishment.

As my hon. Friend knows, the former mining research and development establishment is a "prescribed place" under the 1984 RMPS order and therefore her constituents are, in principle, covered. Equally, they must meet the same requirements as apply to all others if they are to qualify, and their circumstances have to be judged individually against the relevant criteria.

I make no blanket judgment against my hon. Friend's constituents. I observe only that certain mining research and development programmes are ending and that the contraction of effort in this area is not sufficient to show that the jobs are going as a consequence of the closure of pits or job losses at pits.

My hon. Friend knows that industrial staff at the former mining research and development establishment are employed on three main types of work: first, making prototype machines and other equipment in a specialist workshop at the establishment; secondly, maintaining the establishment sites at Stanhope, Bretby and its satellite some four miles away at Swadlincote; and, thirdly, on setting up and carrying out tests on large-scale mining equipment underground at collieries, on the surface and in partially simulated underground conditions.

The number of men engaged on this type of work was increased considerably during the 1970s when a number of programmes were introduced, for example, in relation to the use of improved automatic monitoring and control equipment. Many of them have now been completed or are nearing completion. As a result, the work available is now declining as the board's research and development programmes are adjusted to meet the future needs of the industry, but whether the resulting job losses fall within the terms of the statutory redundant mineworkers payments scheme is a matter of law, not of my discretion. I have no discretion in this area.

Nor are we talking here about some technical amendment to the current RMPS order to rectify an anomaly. Rather, to the extent that my hon. Friend is seeking some general guarantee that her constituents at the former mining research and development establishment will be eligible for benefits under the RMPS, she is asking for a Bill to be introduced to change the fundamental basis of the scheme from that which has been accepted by Parliament for the past 18 years.

It is inevitable that under any scheme determined by legislation there will be some cases that just fail to qualify and some that just qualify. It is equally clear, however, that in any scheme of statutory benefits the class of those entitled must be tied as closely as possible to the underlying intention behind the legislation if the Exchequer is to be properly protected. The more generous the benefits, the more important it is that there should be a clear and proper basis for determining who may benefit.

I remind the House that when the redundant mineworkers payments scheme was first introduced in July 1968, only men aged 55 or over on redundancy were entitled to benefits not exceeding £14·25 per week for up to three years. The first major improvement came in 1973, when three new benefits were introduced: first, a lump benefit for men made redundant between 35 and 55; secondly, a sum equivalent to the prevailing rate of unemployment benefit following exhaustion of unemployment benefit to age 65, and thirdly Government reimbursement to the NCB of the costs of continuing to provide concessionary coal to redundants.

After a number of years in which only minor improvements were made, in 1980 the lump sum payments were improved and the qualifying age for those payments reduced from 35 to 21. In 1981 the maximum period for payment of basic weekly benefit was extended from three to five years, a lump sum benefit additional to weekly benefit was introduced for men aged 55 to 59 and the lump sum payments to men aged 21 to 54 were further improved. In 1983, weekly benefits, in the form of a pension supplement and unemployment benefit equivalent were introduced for men aged 50 to 54 and further improvements were made to the lump sum payments for those aged between 26 and 46. Finally, in 1984, there was a further substantial improvement in lump sums to men aged 21 to 49, based on £1,000 per year of service.

We now have possibly the most generous scheme that has ever been seen in this country or in the Community. My hon. Friend was right to refer to that. I make no apology for it, as I believe that men who spend a lifetime in the mining industry deserve these payments, particularly those who work at the coal face. My hon. Friend asked about her constituents, who have given a lifetime of service to the industry, and who, by their very endeavours have made possible major export orders for maintenance and improvement of job prospects in the mining equipment industry, and the better health of the industry as a whole.

I point out to my hon. Friend that when the scheme was originally introduced, careful thought was given to the extent to which it should be deployed to cover other groups. Because of the generous nature of the benefits made available, it was decided, under the primary legislation, to restrict it to the category, to which I and my hon. Friend have already referred, set out in section 7:

> "For the purpose of providing assistance to persons made redundant by the closure of coal mines".

Men can receive extremely generous benefits. Younger men can receive lump sums of up to £33,000 and older men total weekly benefits which may exceed a £100 per week, plus lump sums. In asking taxpayers to meet the costs of benefits at this level it is right, as far as possible, that the availability of benefits should be restricted to those whose particular circumstances meet those that justified the need for special Government support beyond that available in other industries. I fear that I cannot accept that my hon. Friend has shown that the present legislation leads to such unacceptable anomalies or serious injustices that the fundamental basis of the legislation must be changed. I think that my hon. Friend recognises that any change to be made in the scheme would have to be made in primary legislation, although, as she is aware, from time to time statutory instruments are introduced that deal with the details of the scheme. It would not be possible for such a statutory instrument to encompass the fundamental change that she is urging on me.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Supposing the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) moved from the research centre to a pit and were subsequently made redundant, would their length of service be uninterrupted, or would

there be a break in service? How would it be considered in the industry, if they transferred to a coal pit before being made redundant?

Mr. Hunt: If at the time of the redundancy the individuals qualified under the conditions clearly set out in the scheme, and were made redundant by the closure of the coal mine where they were then working, they would be entitled to payments under the redundant mineworkers' payment scheme. That is clear. My hon. Friend is already pointing to the necessity of making the legislation absolutely clear. The way in which that is done is by looking at the place of employment together with the other conditions that are necessary to prescribe qualification.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The Minister referred to men at the mining research and development establishment, which is accepted as being industrial. If it is decided to close the establishment because of the rundown of collieries in the area, will they be eligible under the scheme?

Mr. Hunt: That is a matter for the coal board to raise with my Department. It may well be that there are other possibilities.

I shall consider carefully all the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South—and the point that the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) has just raised—just as I have on the many other occasions on which my hon. Friend has raised these important matters.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

QUEEN'S SPEECH (ANSWER TO ADDRESS)

The Vice-Chamberlain of the Household reported Her Majesty's Answer to the Address as follows:

I have received with great satisfaction the loyal and dutiful expression of your thanks for the Speech with which I opened the present Session of Parliament.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Middle East

1. **Mr. Walters** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress towards peace in the middle east.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The responsibility for making progress lies in the first place with the parties directly concerned. It is encouraging that both King Hussein and Mr. Peres now accept the need for an international framework for peace negotiations. We shall continue to support the efforts of all those who are working to find a way forward to negotiations.

Mr. Walters: Bearing in mind the rebuffs that King Hussein suffered when pursuing his peace initiative, will my right hon. and learned Friend try to ensure that a serious initiative is launched by the United States and Israel, which is from where it must now come, and, in particular, that Mr. Peres' speech is followed by detailed proposals, to be discussed at an international conference, which show a willingness by the Israelis to exchange territory for peace?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am in general sympathy with my hon. Friend's point of view. An international conference may certainly have a part to play, but we are not yet convinced that the scene has been sufficiently set for that. The position certainly calls for a willingness by the Israeli Government to follow the lead offered by Mr. Peres' speech, and the role of the United States is indispensable to the progress of the peace process if King Hussein's initiative is to be carried forward, as we would all wish.

Mr. Beith: Does the Foreign Secretary share the hope that President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev will find time in Geneva, among all their other concerns, to discuss their common interest in working together to produce stability and peace in the middle east?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman is right to identify regional questions as topics appropriate for discussion between the two superpowers, and I am glad that they have been appearing increasingly on the agenda for such discussions. Whether President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev will be able to take that particular topic further forward at their present meeting is less certain. It should be an active item on their agenda.

Mr. Latham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if the Soviet Union is to play a constructive role, which is by no means impossible, an essential prerequisite is that it resumes diplomatic relations with Israel?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We would certainly like to see wide international involvement in carrying the process forward. If, as part of that, the establishment of diplomatic relations were to come about, it would be welcomed.

Mr. Ernie Ross: What confidence can King Hussein have in future talks with the Government, given that the Government failed to live up to the letter of invitation to the Jordanian-PLO delegation, which led to the shambles in London earlier? If the Foreign Secretary is concerned that King Hussein's initiative should succeed in future, what statement would he make to give King Hussein and the PLO confidence that any future initiative proposed by him or the Prime Minister will have a chance of success?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman does not accurately—*[Interruption.]* I am reminded that I must welcome the hon. Gentleman back to the House, and I gladly do so.

Unfortunately, I cannot share the hon. Gentleman's perception of the matter. King Hussein clearly understood the circumstances leading to the visit by the joint Jordanian/Palestinian delegation. It came on the clear understanding that it would unequivocally and publicly state its commitment to a peaceful settlement and its opposition to terrorism and violence. That means the acceptance of the two Security Council resolutions and of Israel's right to exist. King Hussein publicly confirmed that. Assurances to that effect had been negotiated with the Jordanian Prime Minister, and King Hussein confirmed that it was through no fault of ours that that meeting did not take place.

We remain anxious and willing to do everything that we can with King Hussein and anybody else who can help to carry forward the initiative which he started.

Chile

2. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Chilean Government regarding the reimposition of the state of seige in September.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): The Chilean authorities lifted the state of seige on 17 June and replaced it with a state of emergency, which remains in force. We leave the Chilean authorities in no doubt about our concern at the continuation of human rights abuses in that country.

Mr. Corbyn: What representations have the Government made about the large number of people in Chile who have been arrested in the last few months? Specifically, have we taken up the cases of trade union leaders Manuel Bustos and Rodolfo Seguel?

Does the Minister now accept that, because of the abuses of human rights in Chile, it is incompatible with the Britsh Government's declared support for human rights to continue to sell arms to Chile, to coninue to provide military training facilities for the Chilean army and to continue joint military exercises with the Chilean army in the Beagle channel and elsewhere?

Mr. Eggar: We supported European Community representations made in October protesting against the detention of trade union leaders, and we have appealed for a national reconciliation.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that what happens in a country such as Chile is none of our business? Has not the constant seeking of some countries to interfere gratuitously in the domestic affairs of other countries probably been the major cause of wars throughout the centuries? Does he agree that that should cease forthwith?

Mr. Eggar: We have made it clear to the Chilean Government that we wish to see an orderly return to democracy in Chile. We believe that the national accord of 25 August provides a basis for that.

Namibia

4. **Mr. Anderson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how frequently the Western Contact Group on Namibia has met over the past three months.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): There has been no formal Contact Group meeting duing the last three months, but we and our Contact Group partners have remained in close touch.

Mr. Anderson: Was not the group formed seven years ago on the assumption that it could deliver Namibian independence, and has it not utterly failed in the reason for its formation? Will the Government therefore consider a new initiative to the United Nations, rather than take actions such as vetoing the Security Council resolution on Namibia last week, which gave the impression to the world that Britain is South Africa's surrogate in the Security Council?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman's question displays an ignorance of what the Contact Group has achieved. Over the last few years it has been responsible for a wide range of agreements between the South African Government, the Front Line states and the various parties in Namibia about how the UN resolution should be implemented. We regret that that resolution has not yet been brought into effect in Namibia.

As to the vote in the United Nations last week, the hon. Gentleman should appreciate that the United Kingdom and the United States vetoed the resolution and the French Government abstained because all three Governments could not support a policy calling for mandatory sanctions against South Arica—for reasons which are well known to the House.

Mr. Wilkinson: Recently, has not Cuban, and to some extent Soviet Union, support for the NPLA Government in Luanda increased? Until Cuban forces are withdrawn from Angola, will not a peaceful, fair and equitable settlement be impossible?

Mr. Rifkind: There have been disturbing signs of greater Soviet involvement in the actions of the Angolan Government against UNITA in the civil war. The Government believe it desirable that all foreign troops should be withdrawn from Angola—both South African and Cuban—and that the people of Angola should be allowed to determine their own future.

South Africa

5. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet representatives of black people in South Africa.

Sir George Howe: I have in recent months met Dr. Motlana of the Soweto Civic Association and the United Democratic Front, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. I remain prepared to meet representatives of all shades of opinion within South Africa that are not committed to violence.

Mr. Rathbone: I wish that I could thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Where representation within a nation is denied, is it not all the more important to encourage talks with the disfranchised on the broadest international basis? Will the Government reconsider their present requirement for conditions to such talks?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am sorry that my hon. Friend could not manage to summon up gratitude for my reply. I thank him for having repeated the points that he made on this topic in our recent debate. I shall, of course, continue to reflect upon them.

Mr. Mikardo: Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman had an opportunity to read the transcript of the evidence given a week or so ago to the Foreign Affairs Committee by Mr. Oliver Tambo? If so, does he agree that that evidence suggests a better opportunity for a way forward than many of us might have expected?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have studied the evidence given by Mr. Tambo to the Select Committee. Indeed, it deserves study with care. However, the fact remains that the support by the ANC for a suspension of violence along the lines commended in the Commonwealth Heads of Government communiqué would not only enhance its reputation but help to promote the prospect of dialogue both inside and outside South Africa.

Mr. Adley: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that it is not the ANC, or any other group, that is cruising round the townships in South Africa shooting people from armoured vehicles? He constantly repeats his commitment not to talk to people unless they renounce violence. Does that not apply first and foremost to the South African Government? Does he agree that throughout the history of this country there have been numerous cases—such as Kenyatta, Makarios, Gandhi and others—where we have been too late in recognising the view of the majority population?

Mr. Geoffrey Howe: I know that my hon. Friend has reflected considerably on this matter. Of course, if progress is to be made towards the dialogue that we want in South Africa, actions and changes are necessary on both sides. I do not believe that it is right to approach the question from the balance that my hon. Friend suggests. I agree that if the South African Government were to

proceed swiftly to the unconditional liberation of Mr. Nelson Mandela, that would be an act of comparable importance and very valuable indeed.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain to representatives of the black people in South Africa why a delegation from the Leeds chamber of commerce is currently on a commercial visit to South Africa with the support of Government money—despite the agreement reached in Nassau by the Commonwealth Heads of Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is entirely different from the subject of the main question. The Government are in course of putting into effect the conclusions reached by the Commonwealth Heads of Government mission on that aspect, as on many other matters. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman could be regarded as having served his constituents particularly well if a mission of that sort were to be interrupted and cut off in mid flight in the context of the policy change announced.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets those representatives, will he bear in mind the extra burden placed on reformers within the South African Government as a result of recent by-elections in that country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think that I follow my hon. Friend's point of view, though I am at a loss to know who are the people who will meet me and to whom I am meant to express that view.

Mr. Healey: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the mission from the Leeds chamber of commerce has not yet left this country, that it has been considering whether it should travel, and that the Government's decision, in spite of their undertaking to their Commonwealth partners, to fund the mission, is absolutely impossible to justify and is a grave offence to all the Prime Ministers at that conference who believed that the Government would carry out the undertakings that they solemnly gave?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I fail to understand the right hon. Gentleman's manifestation of concern on this issue. We have undertaken not to finance any new missions of this kind. This is a mission for which, I understand, undertakings have already been given. Although the right hon. Gentleman is right to be concerned that pledges given at Nassau are upheld, I do not understand why he should put his interests in that ahead of those of supporting missions to which we are already committed.

Mr. McQuarrie: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that to have any discussions with the black representation in South Africa would be wrong when the likes of Oliver Tambo can come to this House and condone, and continue to condone, violence, and when Nelson Mandela has repeatedly said that, even if he were released from prison, he would condone violence in any shape or form?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I could not go as far as my hon. Friend, who appears to be wanting me to repudiate the prospect of any discussions with black representatives in South Africa. We wish to see a suspension of violence on a basis that would enhance the prospects of a dialogue between black representatives and the South African Government. That is our position, and we stand by it.

Chile

6. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Chilean Government regarding progress towards democracy in that country.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend recently reminded Senor Del Valle of the widespread interest in the United Kingdom in seeing an early return to democracy in Chile. We also welcome the opportunity provided by the national accord for Chile to make progress towards the restoration of a full and genuine democracy.

Mr. Davies: Does the Minister agree that these representations from the British Government would carry more weight and credibility if they refused to use their vote in the General Assembly in favour of Chile, if they refused to carry out their programme of training military personnel and if they refused to sell arms to Chile? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a change of direction in those policies would ensure that the Chilean Government took more notice of us?

Mr. Eggar: Our vote in the United Nations will be decided on the merits of the resolution, which has not yet been circulated. We shall, of course, consider matters relating to arms when and if those issues arise.

Sir Peter Blaker: I do not dissent from the action that Her Majesty's Government have taken in regard to Chile, but should we not beware of double standards here? Have we made representations to the Government of the Soviet Union and others in eastern Europe regarding the desirability of making progress towards democracy in those countries, bearing in mind not least the fact that they have signed the Helsinki agreement, which commits them to democracy and full human rights?

Mr. Eggar: I have taken careful note of what my right hon. Friend has said. Of course, we always take the opportunity to make representations to the Soviet Union and its allies.

Mr. Wareing: Does the Minister agree that it would be a matter of concern for Her Majesty's Government if arms supplied by this country had been used in the recent repression in Chile? Can he give a categorical guarantee that no arms supplied by this country have been used in that repression?

Mr. Eggar: So far as we are aware, no such arms have been used.

Mr. Porter: Has my hon. Friend sought the views of the Chilean Government about the problems of the government of Northern Ireland? Apparently we take the views of all sorts of foreign Governments on the matter.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point.

Mr. Foulkes: On a rather more serious note, will the Minister tell the House whether the Government welcome the national accord that has been signed by almost all the democratic parties in Chile? Will the Government join the increasing chorus of criticism of the repression carried out by General Pinochet and join my right hon. and hon. Friends in calling for the imposition of a complete embargo on arms sales to Chile? Will he give a specific assurance—he has said that the issue has not yet arisen —that no export licence will be granted by the British

Government for the sale of Centaur armoured vehicles to Chile? We know that they will be used for internal repression.

Mr. Eggar: As I have said to the House on at least two occasions, we have already made it clear to the Chilean Government that we welcome the national agreement on the transition to full democracy, which was issued on 25 August on behalf of the moderate political parties in Chile. There is no question about anything being done with the Centaur armoured vehicle except being returned to the United Kingdom.

South Africa

7. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the latest representations made by Her Majesty's Government to the South African Government over the internal position in that country.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On 2 November we made it clear to representatives of the South African Government, both in London and Pretoria, that we were disturbed by the imposition of restrictions on the freedom of the press to report events in South Africa. These restrictions will do nothing to improve the prospects for that peaceful, fundamental change which we all seek.

Mr. Winnick: Do the South African authorities really believe that banning television in that country will make the outside world lose interest? If they do, they will be proved entirely wrong. To take up the supplementary question of the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), when will the British Government take effective action to support the cause of freedom in South Africa? Is the Foreign Secretary aware how sick and tired we are to hear constantly from the Government why action cannot be taken? By making excuses, they play into the hands of the apartheid regime.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I would rather put that the other way round. The British Government have been taking sustained and determined action to promote the changes in policy that are necessary if we are to secure the ending of apartheid by peaceful means as quickly as possible. The British Government fought tenaciously and valiantly to establish a position agreed by all the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Nassau. We are now working to secure the prospect of success for that Commonwealth eminent persons group. I would rather say that the House is sick and tired of the hon. Gentleman casting aspersions on every genuine attempt that the Government make to secure those ends.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that much of the violence and reporting in and from South Africa has been grossly exaggerated by the world's press, not least by the BBC, in much biased reporting of the sad events that have taken place? While the ban on the press is to be regretted, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in the circumstances it was almost unavoidable? Is it not better for the Government to continue some form of dialogue than to take the road that is advocated by the Opposition, which involves sanctions and isolation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand my hon. Friend's arguments and agree absolutely with his closing point. It is of the utmost importance for us to do all that we can to promote dialogue in South Africa. We would like nothing better than to see the South African Government taking the decisive steps that are necessary to move in that direction.

Mr. Foot: Will the Foreign Secretary explain the exact context in which the Prime Minister used the phrase "teeny-weeny concession"?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman appears sufficiently well-informed to make a judgment for himself.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that when he discusses the internal position of South Africa, one of the things that worries that Government is Amnesty International's report on Zimbabwe, which shows that more repression is carried out by blacks on blacks than even that imposed by whites on blacks? Does that not have to be taken into consideration?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Unhappily, there are many reports of human mistreatment of fellow human beings in many countries, and they all have to be taken in their context.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

8. **Mr. George Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made at the review conference on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; and what proposals Her Majesty's Government intend to pursue.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Renton): We are pleased that, in contrast to 1980, this year the review conference produced an agreed document. We warmly welcome this. We intend to work to implement the conference's recommendations for improving the International Atomic Energy Authority safeguards system, and the transfer of nuclear technology to developing countries. Many of the recommendations were proposed by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Robertson: The most important measure sought at the review conference was the conference on the comprehensive test ban treaty. Does not the Government's stance on verification look increasingly feeble, because the new technical developments, as even the technology page in yesterday's *Financial Times* showed, would make detection and verification simple? We should ask the Government to review their position on the subject, or be driven to the conclusion that the United Kingdom is resistant to the possibility of such a treaty because it wants to test its own Trident missiles before preventing people from conducting similar tests.

Mr. Renton: Yes, I too read the article in yesterday's *Financial Times*. I agree that the experiments in Norway lead to a possible avenue which is well worth pursuing. The key requirement continues to be for the Soviet Union to accept the monitors that have now been invented. I disagree wholeheartedly with the hon. Gentleman's final point. We are committed to the goal of an effective comprehensive test ban, but the word effective is crucial to this. We are not yet convinced that verification developments can lead to a foolproof test ban system.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the greatest threats that we face is the

acquisition of nuclear weapons by unstable and fanatical regimes? Will he vigorously support proposals to open all nuclear installations to international inspection and to halt the spread of uranium enrichment technology?

Mr. Renton: Yes, Sir. One of the successes of the non-proliferation treaty, to which another 17 countries have become members in the past five years, has been the halting of horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, while encouraging peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

South Africa

9. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being taken to arrange the recall of British military attachés from South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: Both British military attachés accredited to the Republic of South Africa have now been recalled.

Mr. Parry: I am delighted by that reply, because, early in September, I asked the Prime Minister whether we would consider breaking off all diplomatic links with South Africa. In view of the serious situation in South Africa, will the Government consider breaking off diplomatic relations with that country?

Mr. Rifkind: We think that that would be an extremely foolish action to take. The Commonwealth Heads of Government conference decided to seek a dialogue between the Commonwealth and the South African Government. To contemplate action of the type recommended by the hon. Gentleman would fly in the face of that approach.

Mr. Ian Lloyd: I very much regret the recall of the military attachés. If the Government change their mind and those attachés eventually return to South Africa, will my hon. Friend ensure that they return via Delville Wood, the Sangro river, El Alamein, Sidi Rezegh and the many other cemeteries in which the South African dead of the second world war are buried?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the valiant contribution during the second world war by many black and white South Africans and people from other parts of Africa. I think he will appreciate, however, that we are seeking to do what we can to make clear our disapproval and detestation of apartheid, but not in a way that damages the economic prospects of the South African people.

Mr. Anderson: On 25 September we agreed with our EEC partners not only to recall our military attachés in South Africa but to refuse to grant accreditation to South African military attachés in this country. Is it not the Government's policy that the military attachés in the South African embassy in London can remain until they are recalled by their Government?

Mr. Rifkind: The point that the hon. Gentleman has put to me is a matter that is currently under consideration by the Foreign Ministers of the European Community. At this stage, only Belgium and Luxembourg have taken the decision to ask for the recall of South African attachés from their capitals. The matter is under active consideration at present.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Has not anxiety been expressed in this House about South African military excursions into neighbouring territories? Is it not therefore stupid to withdraw from South Africa those who would be able to assess and report on those operations to Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Rifkind: Her Majesty's Government are satisfied that the action that we have taken will not, in practice, jeopardise such information that we have about the matters to which my hon. Friend referred. We have always made it clear that incursions by South African troops into neighbouring sovereign states is a matter to be condemned and discouraged at every available opportunity.

Mr. Lawrence: As, most commendably, it is the Government's policy to oppose terrorism on every front, will my hon. and learned Friend say why the African National Congress is allowed to operate through its attachés out of an office in London?

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. and learned Friend will be aware, the British Government's policy has always been that individuals are free to set up any office that they wish in London as long as their actions and activities do not conflict with British law. If there is any evidence that any individual in such an office is taking action that conflicts with our law, steps will be taken to deal with that matter at the earliest opportunity.

EC Intergovernmental Conference

10. **Mr. Garrett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made at the EEC intergovernmental conference; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Discussions are continuing at both ministerial and official level with a view to presenting recommendations for consideration by Heads of Government at the European Council on 2 and 3 December.

Mr. Garrett: Does the Foreign Secretary accept that his reply is, word for word, what I expected and what I have already written down? Is there a possibility, or even a faint hope, that one day he will come to the Dispatch Box and tell us about the chaos within the EEC and whether ministerial talks are failing? Will there be a more blunt approach to the problems? Is it not time that he tackled matters with rather more vigour than he has hitherto done?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am delighted not to have disappointed the hon. Gentleman with the terms of my reply. He asked what progress was being made in the conference which is to take place in less than a fortnight from now. I shall be glad to report to him what progress has been made at that conference, when it has taken place.

Mr. Cash: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the negotiations that are taking place at the moment leading to the intergovernmental conference. Will he assure me that at the moment there is no question of the European Parliament's consent being attached to the decision on whether the treaties could be revised under article 236?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: A number of proposals have been put forward by a number of states that relate to possible amendments of the treaties. I do not recollect any of them dealing with that point.

Mr. Spearing: As it is known that there are proposals at the conference for the establishment of a permanent staff

to the presidency, particularly in respect of the mode of European extra-treaty co-operation, and suggestions for enhancing the powers of the Strasbourg Assembly, will the Foreign Secretary tell us whether proposals tabled by Her Majesty's Government, such as the Stresa memorandum and matters that he mentioned in a recent speech, are to be made public and, if so, in what manner?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have put forward no new proposals in the context of the intergovernmental conference. The practical proposals that we put forward earlier this year for the Stresa meeting are still on the table, and have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Forth: When considering the proposals put forward to enhance the powers and involvement of the European Parliament in Community affairs, decision-making and the composition of that Parliament, will my right hon. and learned Friend, bear in mind the difficulty that it has in achieving consistent policy decisions owing to its shifting political balance and its recent activities with regard to the EEC's budget?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to relevant points. Our purpose is to enhance the Community's effectiveness, especially its decision-making procedures. I shall bear those points in mind.

Mr. Deakins: Why is the right hon. and learned Gentleman in favour of giving more powers to the European Assembly when such powers can only be at the expense of the powers of the British House of Commons?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have reached no conclusions as to any such change. We are examining proposals as they come forward for consideration at the conference. It would not be right to conclude that the powers of the European Parliament could be enhanced only at the expense of the House. They could be enhanced at the expense of other Community institutions. It is because of the diversity of choices that could be made that we are most anxious that any change enhances the effectiveness of the Community's decision-taking procedure.

Mr. George Robertson: Why is it appropriate for Ministers to brief the press after meetings of the intergovernmental conference, but not to brief the House of Commons on the position of the British Government in the lead-up to the Luxembourg summit? When will we be told precisely what stage the negotiations have reached and what the likely stance of the United Kingdom will be at the summit that will take place in only 10 days' time? Will the Foreign Secretary tell the House now what the stance of the Government is on improved Customs union, a permanent secretariat on foreign affairs, increased powers for the European Parliament through amendments to the treaty and specifically on the French initiative tabled yesterday for increased European union, which is apparently to be one of the surprise subjects that will be dealt with at the Heads of Government summit next weekend?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has indicated the breadth of his curiosity and indeed to some extent his knowledge of the subject. As he said, the French proposal was tabled yesterday. It will be discussed in the context of the many other proposals before the conference. We shall judge whatever proposals finally emerge by whether they make a real difference to the achievement of our objectives, above all for completion of a genuine common market.

South Africa

11. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards South Africa.

15. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement about the situation in South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: We are working for the total elimination of apartheid and for rapid progress towards a genuinely non-racial democracy in South Africa.

Dr. Mawhinney: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Has he had an opportunity to meet and offer encouragement to any of the South African industrialists, business men and others who recently visited Lusaka? If not, has he plans to do so?

Mr. Rifkind: I have had contact with at least one of the South African business men. We have obviously noted with interest the efforts being made by the South African business community to persuade their Government to work for a more rapid dismantlement of the apartheid system.

Mr. Canavan: On the question of sanctions, will the Minister heed the words of black South African leaders such as Oliver Tambo, who recently told the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs that real and effective sanctions would be welcomed by the majority of the South African people, who are prepared to make further sacrifices so as to overthrow the apartheid regime and bring about the liberation of the majority of the people? Has the stubborn refusal of the British Tory Government to implement real and effective sanctions against South Africa got anything to do with the fact that many of the British based companies with vested financial interests in South Africa are also big contributors to the financial coffers of the Tory party?

Mr. Rifkind: Mr. Tambo is only able to put forward his own views and those of his organisation. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that Chief Buthelezi, who speaks for many millions, takes the opposite view. With regard to whether the British Government's view on sanctions is because of an alleged connection with donations made by British companies to the Conservative party, I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Labour Government also strongly opposed economic sanctions. I leave it to the hon. Gentleman to inquire from his own leadership whether that was because of secret donations to the Labour party.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that Her Majesty's Government have no more right to interfere in the internal affairs of South Africa, a sovereign state, than they have a right to interfere in the internal affairs of the United States of America or Soviet Russia?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree with my hon. Friend that one must always be cautious when commenting on the internal affairs of any country. The need for a peaceful resolution of the problems of South Africa is not only of importance

to the people of South Africa but has profound implications for the stability of southern Africa and for wider international issues.

Mr. Madden: As the South African Government have chosen to stop the media, including the British media, telling the truth about what is happening in that country, why do the British Government allow the South African ambassador to remain here and to use the media, including the British media, to propagate lies about what is happening in South Africa?

Mr. Rifkind: I notice that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to see the recall of other ambassadors from countries with which we have equally profound differences of opinion. I ask him at least to try to be consistent in his approach.

Mr. Hayes: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that if there is to be real change in South Africa, it will come from within? Will he wholeheartedly support the many industrialists—I met one who came back from negotiating with the African National Congress in Lusaka —who publicly and openly condemn apartheid?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct to emphasise that at the end of the day profound change will come because of factors and pressure operating within South Africa. One of the most encouraging developments is the increasing proportion of white South Africans, including those from the Afrikaner community, who are taking the lead in calling for much more fundamental and radical reform from their own Government.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Does the Minister accept that the Government's laudable intentions to see the end of apartheid in South Africa will be widely accepted? However, does he realise that intentions are not enough? Will the "teeny weeny" measures that the Prime Minister said were being taken against South Africa be built up into bigger measures after the six months have gone by?

Mr. Rifkind: We have always made it clear that we are prepared to contemplate measures that show our disapproval of and do damage to apartheid, but we are not prepared to support measures designed to destroy the South African economy to the disadvantage of all South Africans, black and white.

Viscount Cranborne: Following that reply, will my hon. and learned Friend also bear in mind, when he is considering British policy towards South Africa, what the effect of sanctions could be on neighbouring countries, particularly if miners native to neighbouring countries have to be sent home as a result of the imposition of economic sanctions?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that matter. One has noticed in recent months that Swaziland has been opposed to economic sanctions, Botswana has said that it intends to campaign neither for nor against economic sanctions, thereby showing its sensitivity to the matter, and the Zimbabwean Government have said that while they approve of sanctions, they would expect to be compensated for their effect.

Mr. Beith: Would it help the success of the Commonwealth mission if the British Government said, as the Prime Minister did, that if the mission is not successful there are no further measures in the direction of sanctions that the British Government are prepared to contemplate?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that our efforts at the moment are concentrated on the eminent persons group that the Commonwealth has decided to appoint. We hope very much that the objective of the group, which is to establish a dialogue with all those in South Africa who can help towards the evolution of fundamental reform, will be successful.

12. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being taken to seek to discourage scientific agreements between bodies in Britain and South Africa by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Rifkind: We know of only one formal scientific agreement between British and South African public bodies, and it is due to expire in June 1986. We agreed as part of the Luexembourg measures to discourage those scientific agreements with South Africa which could have a role in supporting apartheid.

Mr. Eastham: In view of the instability of the South African Government, are the Government not concerned about having an official agreement on nuclear development? Why should South Africa further enjoy associate membership of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority systems reliability service? All those matters cause great concern among people in this country, especially with such an unstable country as South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: As I said to the hon. Gentleman, we know of only one scientific agreement between the United Kingdom and South Africa. It relates to the South African astronomical observatory and is due to expire on 30 June 1986. Indeed, the decision to allow it to expire was not taken in the context of the agreement that I announced earlier.

Mr. Pawsey: What positive benefit to the black community is likely to come from banning scientific agreements between the United Kingdom and South Africa?

Mr. Rifkind: I remind my hon. Friend that we specifically insisted, when the wording of the agreement was settled at Luxembourg, that we should discourage scientific agreements that could have a role in supporting apartheid, and we had no desire or intention of discouraging any agreements, either scientific or cultural, which could have no possible conection with apartheid. For example, we were particularly anxious to ensure that the work of the British Council, which is concentrating on assisting the black community in South Africa, would not be impeded by any measures of the sort proposed.

13. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will discuss the situation in South Africa with representatives of the African National Congress.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We recognise the African National Congress as one important focus of black South African opinion and aspirations. The Commonwealth accord called for a lifting of the existing ban on the ANC and other political parties in South Africa and for the beginning of a process of dialogue in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. Clearly, the ANC's support for such a suspension of violence would enhance its reputation and help to promote dialogue within South Africa and with those outside the country who seek a peaceful political solution to that country's problems.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is it not spectacular hypocrisy for the Government to condemn violent opposition to the violent system of apartheid while at the same time opposing effective sanctions, which must be the only alternative to violence in overthrowing the system? Since we all know that the African National Congress would infinitely prefer a peaceful route to liberation, will the Government now enter into sensible negotiations with the ANC, which is the universally accepted representative of the majority in South Arica?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I repudiate absolutely the hon. Gentleman's simplistic view that the only alternative to the present position is the imposition of sanctions. I agree that the suspension of violence by all sides would be desirable. That is what we are seeking, alongside the promotion of dialogue with the leaders of black Africa and the South African Government.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. and learned Friend finally explode the myth that the ANC speaks for the majority of black people in South Africa? Does he agree that Chief Buthelezi, who speaks for about 7 million Zulus, has a far stronger voice and preaches peaceful reform rather than violence? Is it not disgraceful that a House of Commons Select Committee asked a violent revolutionary such as Oliver Tambo to give evidence to it rather than asking a peaceful man such as Chief Buthelezi?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Select Committee must be accountable for its actions and decisions. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that Chief Buthelezi is an outstanding example of someone who speaks for many millions of South Africans and who is not committed to violence.

EC Draft Directives

16. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the importance which the Government attach to the draft directives currently under discussion in the EC, with particular reference to those in the social field.

Mr. Rifkind: Our attitude depends on whether a proposal would implement the objectives of the European Community treaty, whether adequate measures already exist in the individual member states and on the regulatory burden which would result from the adoption of a Community instrument.

Mr. McKay: That is a disappointing reply. Can the Minister explain why the Government intend to veto the already watered-down draft directive on parental leave and why, in the case of directives on workers' information and consultation and part-time working, the United Kingdom always appears to put up the blocks?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government believe, as a general rule, that such matters are best arranged voluntarily between employees and employers. In addition, there is no advantage in Governments imposing additional burdens on employers that could act contrary to the interests of creating jobs and maintaining employment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Have the Government any information on whether the South African Government have access to nuclear weapons technology, and will the Minister make a statement?

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question is about the EC.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: Will my hon. and learned Friend be robust in maintaining the point that he has just made so that he does not allow these strange social measures to creep in and make us even less competitive than we are now?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. One initiative taken by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is to achieve greater deregulation in the Community to reduce the existing burden, especially on smaller businesses and firms with few employees. The last thing that we would wish to do would be to introduce or support measures that would increase the burden at this difficult time.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister abandon all this gobbledegook and Eurospeak? Will he admit that the Government have accepted directive after directive in all other areas — including one to ensure that the temperature at the centre of frozen peas is uniform throughout Europe—but have systematically opposed all directives on progressive social legislation and workers' rights? Has it been caused by a directive from the new, unelected Secretary of State for Employment, or is it merely the result of the Government's well-known dogma?

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted and slightly amused by the fact that the Labour party has suddenly been converted to the desirability of European action imposed throughout the Community. We have not previously heard such a view from Opposition Front Bench spokesmen. We are indeed selective. Unlike the hon. Gentleman, we consider each proposal on its merits.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister confirm that there is under consideration a directive to give assistance to agricultural projects in the peripheral areas of the Community, including the Scottish islands? Will he confirm that the United Kingdom Government will not seek to reduce the amount of money that will go into such projects?

Mr. Rifkind: Obviously the United Kingdom Government wish to ensure that the maximum resources from Community proposals and projects should come to the United Kingdom. Clearly that is an objective that any British Government would be anxious to pursue. We will take that into account as one of the factors when considering any proposals put before us.

South Africa

17. **Mr. Heffer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are being taken by Her Majesty's Government to seek to discourage cultural ties and exchanges between Britain and South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: We have agreed to discourage those cultural events and agreements which could have a role in the support of apartheid. British Council activities in South Africa are unaffected, since they are directed essentially towards black education. There are no cultural agreements between ourselves and the South African Government.

Mr. Heffer: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman explain why it is that retired professors in this country go to South Africa to talk about Shakespeare? How is it that *The Guardian* film critic can go to the film festival? How are those things possible when the United Nations has

made a clear decision that there should be a cultural boycott of South Africa? Is it not a fact that British Council money is used as a device to allow certain people to break that boycott?

Mr. Rifkind: If cultural proposals could be shown to be helpful or supportive of apartheid, we would be strongly opposed to them. I do not accept the proposition that the diffusion of Western values, ideas and culture to both blacks and whites in South Africa is an undesirable policy. I argue quite the opposite. If we seek to persuade the South African Government to impose all the values of Western culture, civilisation and our political system, it would be absurd simultaneously to try to cut off South Africa from examples of Western culture.

Mr. Stokes: I heartily agree with my hon. and learned Friend. Why are we in general so severe in our attitude towards the Government of South Africa, which is friendly to the West and, at the same time, friendly towards many other countries in southern Africa whose internal conditions are far worse?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the substantial problems of human rights that exist in many countries in Africa. However, in the case of South Africa, there is the additional factor that the South African Government have always maintained that South Africa is part of Western society and that they apply Western values. We are entitled to draw attention to those aspects of their policy that are contrary to that claim.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

18. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Government intend to take action following the non-proliferation treaty review conference to try to secure agreement on a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We have been trying to achieve progress towards a comprehensive test ban treaty for some time, particularly at the conference on disarmament in Geneva, where we have tabled a paper on seismic monitoring as a contribution to resolve the difficulties that still stand in the way of a treaty. A copy of this paper is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Strang: Is it just an insensitive coincidence that the first exercise in the deployment of American cruise missiles from Greenham common for four months should occur right in the middle of the Gorbachev-Reagan summit? Is this the American military's way of telling us that the summit will not change anything? Were the British Government consulted in advance about the decision to take these ground-launched cruise missiles on to Salisbury plain this morning?

Mr. Renton: As a spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said this morning, the deployment of the cruise missiles was purely fortuitous. On the matter of the summit, may I remind the hon. Gentleman of what a White House spokesman said last night, that those who talk at the moment will not know, and those who know will not talk? At this stage in the summit that is sensible advice to follow.

Mr. Soames: Does my hon. Friend nevertheless agree that a comprehensive test ban treaty is of the utmost importance, and that the argument about verification is no longer valid? Will he and his colleagues press ahead with this matter?

Mr. Renton: I fully agree with my hon. Friend's first point, but do not agree with his second one. It is necessary to arrive at a system in which there is clear differentiation between seismic disturbances caused by natural phenomena, such as earthquakes, and disturbances caused by low level nuclear explosions. The problem of such differentiation has not yet been solved, nor has the problem of peaceful nuclear explosions. Many countries want to continue such explosions, while wanting to stop military nuclear explosions, but it is obvious that peaceful explosions could be relevant to military purposes.

Mr. Healey: Does the Minister agree that leading seismologists in Britain, Canada and the United States now agree that it is physically and scientifically possible to distinguish natural convulsions from underground explosions? The hon. Gentleman referred with approval to an article in yesterday's *Financial Times*. Since the non-proliferation treaty review conference asked the nuclear powers to resume negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty before the end of the year, will the Government take the initiative in inviting other nuclear powers to such a conference immediately?

Mr. Renton: Seismologists differ on technical matters, just as economists do, as the right hon. Gentleman will remember from his days as Chancellor of the Exchequer. I suggest that he reads the paper tabled by the United Kingdom in July, which shows some of the difficulties of seismic monitoring. It emphasises the difficulties, about which many experts agree. It is essential that steps be taken on verification as a prelude to genuine discussions about a comprehensive test ban. We hope that that will continue in the conference on disarmament.

Mr. George Robertson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I seek your advice? You will have noticed the discussion on question No. 10 concerning the intergovernmental conference of the European Community. Since Britain's accession to the EC, Ministers have regularly reported on the outcome of European Council meetings to the House. We have had no reports from any Ministers on any European Council meetings since the new Session began. A Foreign Ministers Council is meeting in almost permanent session at an intergovernmental conference, but all that the House has to rely on are confused and confusing newspaper reports about the conference and the stance of British Ministers. The meeting is a prelude to the Heads of Government summit, which is to take place at the end of next week and the beginning of the following one. The abandonment of the principle that Ministers report to the House must concern you as well as the rest of us. Can we seek your protection to ensure that Ministers no longer keep the House in the dark on these vital issues?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that whether the Government seek to make a statement is not a matter for me.

Mr. Madden: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raised a point of order with you yesterday——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall deal with that in a moment, if I may.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Several Conservative Members have spoken on South African matters. I have looked up the Register of Members' Interests. Several of the hon. Members who spoke did not declare that they have made trips to South Africa paid for by the South African authorities. Would it not be better if we changed our procedures so that the House knows, without having to look up the Register of Members' Interests, that sponsored trips have been made by the hon. Member——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has asked a question that I can answer. It is not necessary during Question Time to declare an interest, because it will appear in the Register of Members' Interests. If the hon. Gentleman wants a change in the procedures, he should take the matter up with the Select Committee on Procedure.

Questions to Ministers

3.34 pm

Mr. Speaker: I wish to make a statement in response to the point raised by the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) yesterday.

The hon. Member drew my attention to two instances of Members tabling more than one oral question to the same Minister and asked whether this invalidated the 4 o'clock shuffle for the day in question. There have been further examples today.

The present practice of the Table Office in such circumstances follows the recommendations in the appendix to the report from the Select Committee on parliamentary questions in Session 1971-72. This lays down that record cards should be kept of starred questions once they have appeared in print and that if any starred notice is found to exceed the daily limit it should be unstarred and the Member so informed. When this happens, the Table Office has among other things to give priority to the questions in the order in which they are printed. I understand that those instructions had already been followed in the two cases brought to my attention by the hon. Member yesterday.

However, there is no doubt that unfair advantage in the 4 o'clock shuffle can be gained by any Member who tables more than one question to the same Minister. I have therefore given an instruction to the Table Office that, as from today, all questions dealt with in the 4 o'clock shuffle should be checked before they are sent to the printer and that if it is found that any Member has tabled more than one question to the same Minister the lowest such question in the shuffle should be the one to which priority should be accorded and the remainder tabled as if they had been handed in unstarred. The Member concerned will be informed when this is done. I consider that this will constitute a more equitable rule.

It is my belief that incidents of this kind usually arise from the practice on the part of Members of allowing others to table questions on their behalf. This is a subject which the Select Committee on Procedure might wish to reconsider, as did one of its predecessor Committees in the Session 1975-76, when this practice was much less prevalent.

Finally, I should tell the House that I attended the 4 o'clock shuffle in the Upper Table Office yesterday. I am satisfied that the process is both efficent and impartial. As I said last week, any Member is entitled to attend the shuffle, and I hope that those interested will take the opportunity to do so.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:
Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith
Mr. Gareth Wardell
Mr. Jeremy Hanley

PRESENTATION OF BILL

EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL

Secretary Sir Keith Joseph, supported by Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Chris Patten, and Mr. Bob Dunn, presented (under Standing Order No. 111) (Procedure upon Bills whose main object is to create a charge upon the public revenue) a Bill to increase the limit in section 2(1) of the Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984 on expenditure approved for education support grant purposes, and to exclude remuneration for midday supervision from the Remuneration of Teachers Act 1965: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 12.]

Televising of the House

Mr. Speaker: Before we begin the important debate on the televising of proceedings of the House, I should announce that I have not selected any of the amendments on the Order Paper. I should add, however, that no fewer than 34 right hon. and hon. Members have expressed the wish to take part. A number of them are Privy Councillors. [*Laughter.*]

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Shuffle them out.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

This is not a party political occasion but a House of Commons debate, and, although I shall, of course, take account of views from either side of the House, it will be the Chair's endeavour to balance the arguments for and against in calling Members to speak. So that as many Members as possible may express their views on this important House of Commons matter, I appeal for brief speeches. I hope that Privy Councillors, who may be called early, will set a good example.

3.40 pm

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): I beg to move,

That this House approves in principle the holding of an experiment in the public broadcasting of its proceedings by television; and believes that a Select Committee should be appointed to consider the implementation of such an experiment and to make recommendations.

I regard this motion not as a radical departure from ancient tradition but as one more chapter in the long-running saga as to whether, and how, Parliament should have its proceedings reported. Over 400 years ago, when this House was locked in a contest with the monarchs of the day, starting with Queen Elizabeth and followed by the Stuarts, the House became very jealous of its power to keep its proceedings secret. No doubt that made good sense at a time when monarchs had much greater power, but by the end of the 18th century that contest had been well-won. By then, however, the tradition of secrecy was strongly entrenched. There were notable debates and there was controversy, with printers hauled before the Bar of the House for daring to report its proceedings.

I do not think that today anybody would suggest, as did some of our 18th century forebears, that the common people are not good enough to be privy to what is happening in this place and that it is enough for them to hear the results of our deliberations through legislation. However, one argument was advanced which I suspect may ring a bell with several hon. Members: that free reporting of Parliament would bring the danger of misrepresentation and trivialisation. I do not think that that word was used, but that is certainly what was meant.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I agree with it.

Miss Fookes: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is so old, is he?

The same arguments were rehearsed over the sound broadcasting experiment. Although some hon. Members no doubt wish sound broadcasting to come to an end, I think that the general feeling is that it should continue.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Is it not a fact that the radio broadcasts of the proceedings of this House, particularly in the early morning, have trivialised Parliament?

Miss Fookes: No. I take issue with the hon. Gentleman. One of the problems is technical. The microphones that are used in this place give a false impression. It is notable that those who sit in the Public Gallery and watch as well as hear the proceedings do not make as many adverse comments as do those who listen to the proceedings on the radio. I understand from the sound engineers that background noise comes up as foreground noise. In television studios we are asked on no account to rustle papers or to pour water into a glass because of the sound that it makes.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the issue is not trivialisation but censorship? Is she aware that, on the first day of the televising of the proceedings of the House of Lords, I was invited by the BBC to make comments, so I stood at the Bar of the House of Lords for two hours. Then I went into a pub in Whitehall and saw the same debate on television. The two were completely different. The cameras showed the viewer what the producer wanted him to see. If the proceedings of the House are to be televised, the House must be seen as it is, or not at all.

Miss Fookes: I have noted my hon. Friend's observations, but I do not wish to be diverted from the main course of my speech.

There is a reason why my motion is couched in modest terms. It seeks not to get an opinion from the House this afternoon about televising in principle for all time, but at least an experiment in televising the House, which is overseen by a Select Committee. That would give those who, like me, believe that it is a marvellous opportunity to make our House more relevant to the affairs of the country the opportunity to see that that is so. It will also give those who are genuinely disquieted about the idea the opportuity to see what happens in practice, and to come to a conclusion after the experimental period. I cannot see any objection to an experiment, knowing that in the end the decision rests with the House and with none other.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): My hon. Friend passed lightly over the question of sound broadcasting of the proceedings of the House. Does she agree that many hon. Members feel that the tone, conduct and way in which Prime Minister's Question Time is now conducted is worse than it was before broadcasting was started, and that it has done great damage to the House?

Miss Fookes: The simple answer is that I disagree with my hon. Friend's observations.

Let me labour the point about the experiment. It is important that we at least give ourselves the opportunity to see whether televising the House is likely to work in practice. That is a modest request. I hope that, if the debate goes in favour of the experiment, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will introduce a motion to set up a Select Committee with all the normal powers and general trappings that are associated with it—the power to send for persons and papers, and to have specialist advisers if need be. I have not introduced such a motion this afternoon, because it seemed presumptuous to pre-empt the decision of the House. Nevertheless, if the experiment goes ahead, I hope that my right hon. Friend will act quickly.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): On what basis would the hon. Lady consider that the experiment had succeeded, assuming that the House gave its permission to the experiment today?

Miss Fookes: The answer will lie in the decision that the House makes at the end of the day. [AN HON. MEMBER: "What do you want?"] In a seated intervention, one of my hon. Friends asks what I want. If I were allowed to proceed, I would tell the House.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Has there not already been an experiment in the other place? Is it not the case that their Lordships would not be sad if the televising of their House were discontinued?

Miss Fookes: On the contrary; a survey of peers showed that at least 59 per cent. wanted the experiment to continue, and a further number, bringing the total to 78 per cent., wanted it on a permanent basis. The grumbles in the other place have not been about the heat of television lights, but have expressed disappointment when those lights have not been turned on. We learn from their Lordships that they regard the experiment as sufficiently successful to wish to continue with it. They have already decided to do that. Indeed, the experiment in the other place is a good reason why we should follow suit. It seems, not to put too fine a point on it, that they have stolen a march on us, and have gained by the televising of their proceedings while we have lost.

If we allow the cameras in, we shall move forward well into the 20th century—*[Interruption.]* No doubt hon. Members are equally concerned about 20th-century medical advances which might save their lives. There is much to be said for the 20th century.

We must face the fact that many members of the public rely mainly on television for their information about politics. It was estimated in a recent poll that 62 per cent. of the people say that most of their information comes from television — [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] Disgraceful or not, we have to deal with the facts. If it is a fact that most people gain their information from television, we are losing badly by not having television cameras in the Chamber.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): I hope to catch your eye later, Mr. Speaker, so I shall not elaborate, but if the close editing, which has been referred to as trivialisation and in various other ways, has to happen as a technique, surely much of the information will be inaccurate.

Miss Fookes: I shall come to editorial control later. I do not intend to answer just because someone says, "Jump —here and now." [AN HON. MEMBER: "Sock it to 'em Janet."]

We already lose by not having television cameras in the Chamber, because we hand great powers to television producers. They can call upon hon. Members to come out of the Chamber to take part in various programmes for which they have set the format, chosen the subject and the Members of Parliament to discuss it. In that way, they exercise a great deal of control. They may still exercise such control, but there will be an alternative if the cameras focus on what is happening in this place.

I believe with great conviction that people have a right —just like those who sit in the public galleries—to see as well as to hear what we are doing, since that is now technically possible.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Does my hon. Friend's definition of proceedings include Select Committees? If she wishes to ensure a fairer presentation of the bulk of what goes on here, she must include Select Committees. The other place has not yet allowed cameras into Select Committees.

Miss Fookes: I have no objection to the televising of Select Committees, nor, indeed, of Standing Committees, where I personally would stand to gain. However, the Chamber is the most central part and the most difficult, and in an experiment one should concentrate on the area which is likely to be more difficult rather than less difficult. In the fulness of time I envisage that if the Chamber is televised Select and other Committees might also be televised. That would have my blessing.

Some hon. Members have expressed misgivings, not least about the intrusiveness of lighting and cameras. If we were to allow a permanent arrangement, there are means —admittedly expensive—of providing coverage of the Chamber without any discomfort or intrusion to ourselves. I can well understand why, in the past, people shuddered at the thought of what I call an extension of the Lime grove studios to this place, where it is an obstacle race to reach the studio and where the arc lights are exceedingly hot and unpleasant to be under for any length of time.

However, it is interesting to note that Lord Whitelaw, in another place, said that, with the Lords experiment, he has not found the lighting intolerable. My understanding is that with modern cameras there would need to be only a modest increase in lighting in the Chamber, and the cameras could be operated from a distance by remote control. Indeed, only four small discreet cameras would be needed, and they would be mounted under the Galleries.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I am sympathetic to the hon. Lady's argument. Would the special cameras be available during the experimental period, and would the lighting be as inoffensive then as we are led to believe it would be if we agreed permanently to televise our proceedings? Is there not a danger that, if that is not the case, the experiment would put off hon. Members who might be willing to accept the long-term arrangements?

Miss Fookes: I do not know what the position would be for the experiment, but the cameras are certainly available. Of course, we understand the reluctance of the ITN and the BBC to engage in capital expenditure for an experiment only. Let the House be under no misapprehension—the cameras exist. Some of them are British and it would be a small boost to our manufacturing industry if cameras were introduced in this place—*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may hoot, but better British than Japanese.

I hope that no one will refuse the experiment on the ground that life would be so uncomfortable under television lights that it could not be tolerated.

I recall that, 10 years ago, when there was a major debate on this matter, a Committee room was filled with what was then the latest equipment showing what could be done if we were seriously interested in televising our proceedings. I suggest that development will have occurred in the intervening decade. If we were to televise our proceedings, that would no doubt give a spur to the endeavours of manufacturers.

Mr. Richard Holt: Can my hon. Friend tell us where she expects the microphones to be, how many there would be and whether they would pick up all the sounds currently picked up by radio broadcasts?

Miss Fookes: The plain answer is that I do not know. I am not a technocrat or a engineer. However, I am assured that these things could be arranged if the political will were there and if the money was found. No practical technical difficulty stands in the way.

It has been suggested that one of the disadvantages of televising the House is that it would have an undesirable effect upon the behaviour of hon. Members, and that they would seek to play to the gallery. Frankly, I do not think that those who are likely to play to the gallery would do so any more in those circumstances than they do right now. Indeed, I suspect that television cameras might have a good effect upon those whose behaviour leaves something to be desired. Those viewing our proceedings at home would see through ploys and stunts, and rudeness and unmannerly behaviour would be seen for what they were and would do no good to the hon. Members concerned.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene on the important matter of whether televising the Chamber would have an effect on the conduct of right hon. and hon. Members. Does she accept that there are often more hon. Members wishing to take part in debates than opportunities to do so, the opportunity for hon. Members to appear, before their electorate on television would result in the necessity constantly to interrupt those who have been successful in catching Mr. Speaker's eye? That may be an innovation which, I suspect, the Treasury Bench would not welcome.

Miss Fookes: It is a possibility, but it can be exaggerated. Consider, after all, the number of interventions there have been in my speech, without the benefit of television cameras.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Was the hon. Lady in the Chamber when Bernadette Devlin, the day after the Bloody Sunday, grabbed Reggie Maudling by the hair? She did not lose any support despite that emotional outburst. Let us not forget the Irish problem that we have. There have been other occasions—for example, when a bomb was thrown and when a bag of horse manure was thrown from the Public Gallery. People take actions such as those to gain support or publicity for causes, and sometimes they succeed.

Miss Fookes: I would not cite the Irish as a precedent for anything. They seem to be a law unto themselves. That aside, there may be occasions when exciting incidents occur in the House, and I was present when Bernadette Devlin went for Reggie Maudling. I do not think it unreasonable, when those incidents occur—they occur but rarely—that they should be captured on camera. We cannot attempt in a modern democracy to hide ourselves or our faults and failures from the general public.

It should be possible under the ground rules that we might establish that, unless it were impossible to prevent, the cameras would not be expected to focus on the Public Gallery, because there would be a danger of people coming in to demonstrate. They would quickly stop doing that if they knew that the television cameras would not be on them. That would be a legitimate ground rule to lay down.

Other ground rules might be suggested. It would be reasonable for the television authorities, generally speaking, to focus on the Member who has the Floor rather than to cut away too much to other parts of the Chamber. It would be reasonable to cut away to some extent, where there was a real reason for doing so, but it should be done with discretion. It would be an important part of the duties of any Select Committee in any experiment to see how that was done and to keep a watching brief thereafter.

We should need a body to act on our behalf, and I cannot think of a better one than a Select Committee. That body would keep a watching brief always on what was provided to see that it met the general criteria of fairness and impartiality. Let us not forget that there is a legal obligation on the ITN and BBC as part of their licences under the relevant legislation to see that that is carried out. If the cameras were focussed on this place, we should be well placed to see that such basic ground rules were observed.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): From a six-hour debate such as this, television, which is meant to be entertaining, would screen 5 per cent. or 15 minutes of television time. I am sure that we should all like 12 minutes of that to be devoted to the speech of my hon. Friend who now has the Floor and who is making a splendid speech. How would she envisage that time being chosen? If only 5 per cent. of a serious debate is to be screened — there are not in the Chamber many Ciceros to rivet television audiences to their sets—how would my hon. Friend suggest the editors choose that small percentage? It will be chosen, surely, on its entertainment value rather than on reflection, which is what this House is meant to be about.

Miss Fookes: That is a problem, but it is the same problem that faces those who report our proceedings for the newspapers. In virtually every case there must be a selection of material. It is not an impossible task. The fact that it may not be 100 per cent. to our taste is not a good reason for not doing it.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is the hon. Lady satisfied now with the press treatment of the proceedings of this place?

Miss Fookes: Not altogether, but it is one of the perils of democracy that what one says or does may be interpreted or reported by others in a way that one would not wish. That is a small price to pay for informing people of what is happening, if they wish to learn it. As there is always the pressure of time, one can never get away from the difficulties of selection.

It seems that those who argue against would infinitely prefer that there should be no reporting of the proceedings here, because there might be an aspect of the way it was done of which they would disapprove. That seems to be the logical extension of their argument, and I do not accept it.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Does the hon. Lady agree that what goes on in Parliament extends far beyond what goes on in the Chamber? Does she think that televising only the Chamber would create a balanced impression if the essential work done in Committee and elsewhere were not televised?

Miss Fookes: I dealt with that point in response to an earlier intervention, when I said that I would welcome the

extension of televising to Select Committees and Standing Committees but that I felt that in a limited experiment, such as I am advocating, one should concentrate on the Chamber, which is the centre of our proceedings and which is, in technical and other ways, probably the most difficult to do. In other words, let us tackle the difficult part first, and if the problems associated with that can be ironed out, it can be extended to those Committees with good effect, so giving a better idea of the totality of the work of Parliament.

While I agree that that is important, we must take one step at a time. Had I suggested that there should be an experiment not only in televising the Chamber but in covering Select Committees and Standing Committees, I should have been accused of trying to rush ahead, stampeding hon. Members into more than they wished to have. I have tried not to do that, because it is important to give full consideration to all the issues during the process of an experiment.

I am aware of your request, Mr. Speaker, for brief speeches, in view of the number of hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate. Contrary to the views of many hon. Members, I believe that the Chamber is ideally suited to be conveyed on television. Television coming into the average lounge does not capture well huge conferences and mass audiences being harangued from a rostrum. It is well suited to the more intimate nature of this Chamber, where there is the lively interplay of interventions and where Members who speak pompously are often taken down a peg or two. It is a good medium to focus on this Chamber.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I tend to agree that we should televise the proceedings in the Chamber. Does the hon. Lady share my concern, however, about the standard of debate here—I include myself in that—which may cause the public to campaign for a lowering of the television licence fee? Perhaps we should make financial provision for compensation to be paid to the television companies in that eventuality.

Miss Fookes: I do not share the hon. Gentleman's gloomy view of the standard of our debates. On occasion, we can rise to great heights. That does not always happen on the great set occasions, and very often the most effective debates are not those that are well publicised in advance of staged occasions. There are many occasions when we could well put over to the public through the televising of our proceedings a great deal more of what we do than is currently the case.

I state again my profound feeling that the Government are entitled in a democracy to see as well as to hear and to read what goes on in this place. I am far more sanguine about the impact on the public than, it appears, some of my right hon. and hon. Friends and some Opposition Members. If we go ahead, if the experiment goes well and if the televising of our proceedings is finally made permanent, I think that people will wonder what all the fuss was about.

I have great confidence in the ability of the House to maintain worthwhile traditions and to absorb new ones. It is in that spirit that I commend my motion to the House.

4.11 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am glad that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) has brought the motion before the House. I hope that we shall have the wisdom to proceed to establish television in the House as soon as possible. I take that view because of some of the arguments that the hon. Lady has advanced, and for some other reasons.

As the hon. Member for Drake said, many of the arguments against televising our proceedings are the same as those that were used against the original proposals for reporting the House. There were bitter arguments when those proposals were discussed. There were many Members who said that the affairs of the House might be trivialised if they were reported and that great debates might be debased. There was one argument that went beyond that. It was argued that if the proposals were implemented the character of the House would be changed. The character of that 18th century House of Commons was changed by the reporting of its proceedings, and a very good thing, too.

The implementation of the proposals to report the proceedings of the House of Commons constituted perhaps the greatest change in the way in which our affairs were reported to the nation. The moral that we can draw from that is that the House, Parliament and the country have the power, strength and ability to take changes and to weave them into past traditions and to prepare them for the future. If the House proceeds to carry the motion, the Select Committee's recommendations, and the proposition which I believe will come later, that the affairs of the House should be televised, I do not have the slightest doubt that the House will be able to deal with all the problems that will arise. It will not be able to do so in the first week or month, and it will take some time to accommodate them, but the strength of the House is such that it can deal with such changes. It would be a retrograde step if we were not to face change here and now. We should have done so long since, when my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and those before him were introducing their Bills on the subject.

I shall recall to the House what was said a long time ago by my predecessor, who was then the Member for Ebbw Vale. No one can say that he did not understand the ways of the House of Commons and the association of the House with the democratic movements and impulses outside. I shall quote some of his sentences, which continue to set out some of the major arguments. He said:

"It was said last week"—

this was said in the course of the last speech that he addressed to the House of Commons, and much of it is strictly relevant to our current affairs—

"that there was a considerable gulf growing between this House and the nation. I believe that to be absolutely true. There is a lessening interest in our discussions. We are not reaching the country to the extent that we did. It can no longer be argued that the national newspapers are means of communication between the House of Commons and the public. The fact is that Parliamentary reporting has become a sheer travesty. Apart from a few responsible, solid newspapers with small circulations, the debates in this House are hardly reported at all, and such reports as take place are, as hon. Members on both sides know, a complete travesty of our proceedings.

I am not making a special attack upon the newspapers"—

and that probably went for those who were associated with them. I do not think that there are many Members who would consider those words completely inapposite to the position in which we find ourselves today.

My predecessor then described the incipient system which prevailed at that time, which now prevails and which will continue to prevail if we once again reject the

[Mr. Michael Foot]

proposition to televise our proceedings. He referred to the method by which television companies select the Members of Parliament who are to be most prominently displayed on the television screen. He used strong language in referring to the method, as he often did in other debates. I am sure that hon. Members will regard the following sentences as apposite. He said:

"In fact, there has been nothing more humiliating than to see Members of Parliament in responsible positions selected by unrepresentative persons to have an opportunity of appearing on the radio and television.

In my opinion, there is something essentially squalid . . . in Members of Parliament beginning increasingly to rely upon fees provided by bureaucrats in the BBC . . . and ITV."

I do not suppose that any of us reject the fees when they are gracefully offered. None the less, it is much better that the major debates that are reported are the ones that take place in the House rather than those that take place afterwards between Members on both sides of the House who have been selected by those who run Broadcasting House or the ITV.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I have the greatest respect for the right hon. Gentleman and his predecessor. However, when his predecessor talked about a travesty of the truth because an entire debate was not reported in the newspapers or on the radio, how will the travesty be any less when we will be lucky if 2 per cent. of a six-hour debate appears on the television screen? How will the reporting of our debates be any less of a travesty than it is now?

Mr. Foot: The real travesty is the way in which the hon. Gentleman has recited what I read out. I suggest that he goes away and reads the passage carefully before he misrepresents it again. The televising of our proceedings will be an advantage, because it will provide a further medium to report what happens in this place. I am not suggesting that we can dispense with newspapers; they will continue to report what happens here. However, we shall have a different and alternative form of reporting. If the affairs of the House of Commons are reported by television—this is my opinion, and at this stage I cannot prove that I am right, because it will be necessary to wait and see—I believe that there will be a beneficial effect on the travesties of reporting that take place in many of our newspapers.

Mr. Faulds: Is my right hon. Friend suggesting that if this unfortunate development takes place and the cameras and the microphones intrude further into the Commons, somehow or other we will have hours of responsible reporting of the proceedings of the House of Commons? Is he going to pretend that once the cameras come in that will stop our friends, the broadcasting boys, choosing their favourites, whether nationally or regionally? We can all name them and point at them. There are a few of them around in all parts of the House. Is my right hon. Friend suggesting that that practice will cease?

Mr. Foot: I am not suggesting that that practice will cease. I am suggesting only that we shall have a fresh medium for reporting what happens in the House. There will be misrepresentations and misreports and there will be complaints about them, just as there have been complaints about the newspapers' reporting of our affairs. For us to say, in whatever the year is, 1985 — *[Interruption.]* These arguments were brought forward in 1965. For us to suggest in this year that we shall continue to refuse to allow the public to hear what happens in this place by means of television, which is the major form of communication throughout the country, is to deprive the House of its capacities and its rights, and to insult the public.

My predecessor, Aneurin Bevan, went on to say:

"All I am suggesting is that in these days when all the apparatus of mass suggestion are against democratic education we should seriously consider re-establishing intelligent communication between the House of Commons and the electorate as a whole. That surely is a democratic process."—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1959; Vol. 612, c. 865-67.]

My predecessor when on to say that he had not watched television very often, but he believed that some of its reports could bear favourable comparison with reports in the bulk of the newspapers. That was said in 1959. I think that it would have been much better if we had decided then to go ahead with television. As the hon. Member for Drake said, if that had been done, the public would have accepted it as being as much a fact of life as the reporting of our proceedings in the newspapers.

I hope that we will proceed speedily with televising the House of Commons, though I know that there are arguments against it. It has been said that Front Benchers and Privy Councillors will have an advantage. That is not necessarily the case with the reporting of proceedings by the press, and I do not see why it should be so with this new form of reporting.

It is said also that televising will infringe the rights of minorities and smaller parties. Sometimes it is said that the Liberal and Social Democratic parties will not have— *[Interruption.]* Perhaps their attendance will improve with the television cameras. It is said—this is part of a larger argument which I must admit I am always rather dumbfounded to hear — that the Liberal and Social Democratic parties have been unfairly treated by the media. The complaint that the two Davids have been unfairly treated by the media strikes me as the basest example of gratitude since King Lear's daughters, Goneril and Regan, turned upon their father! The House of Commons need not devote too much attention to that aspect. I have not the slightest doubt that minorities and individuals will be able to reshape and guard the process as we proceed.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Does my right hon. Friend remember the serious occasion when he went to the Cenotaph? The proceedings were televised and, because he wore a certain type of jacket, there was an enormous amount of trivialisation. The SDP Members demanded that they should be allowed to go to the Cenotaph as well. Is not this a perfect example of what will tend to happen with televising the proceedings in the House?

Mr. Foot: I recall the incident well. I had on a coat which I had recently purchased. I am happy to have this opportunity to disabuse anyone who might have less understanding of the nature of that coat. My tailor has been complaining ever since. It was a very fine coat. It certainly was not a duffle coat. When I returned to the Foreign Office, where we sometimes had drinks afterwards—I hope that this revelation does not cause too much concern —I was congratulated on the coat by the Queen Mother. Ever since, I have always admired her taste more than I have that of my colleague who complained. But that is a different matter. We can all survive such things.

I hope that the House will make up its mind. Of course there will be problems about the ways in which we shape this process. I underline as strongly as I can that I think that the power and enduring democratic roots of the House of Commons will be strengthened by this change. It is on that basis that I urge the House, not only to greet this propositon now, but to get it working as soon as possible.

4.24 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I want most strongly to support the permanent televising of the proceedings of the House, including the Select Committees. I want that to be done by the BBC, ITV and any regional company that wishes to do so.

This is a matter for the House, and it is one of those rare occasions when individual Members vote according to their wishes. It is not a matter for the Government or Opposition Front Benches; it is for each of us to form our own judgment. I hope that that is what hon. Members will do.

I maintain this position as a principle of democracy. The proceedings of the governing body should be widely communicated as speedily as possible. I maintain it also as a principal right of the citizen to know as quickly as possible the details of the proceedings of the governing body. The time when the citizens could gather in the Forum to hear and participate in the proceedings are long past. Our responsibility must be to make our proceedings as widely available as possible.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heath: I am sorry. As a Privy Councillor, I am not allowed to give way.—[HON MEMBERS: "Oh!"]

Today we have the modern technology to enable us to make the proceedings as widely available as possible.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it a fact that a Privy Councillor cannot give way, or is it that my right hon. Friend will not give way?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is a personal decision. I did not say that.

Mr. Heath: I was interpreting a general wish expressed in this debate, Mr. Speaker, that speeches by Privy Councillors should be as short as possible. I thought that I was responding to the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) that the House is a place for reflection. He should spend more time on reflection instead of interrupting me.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. Friend extend his argument on democracy and the citizen to the Cabinet?

Mr. Heath: I have very strong views now about the whole question of Cabinet Committees and the attempt to prevent the public from ever knowing that they exist. That has obviously proved in modern times to be absolute nonsense. It would, therefore, be much better if we came clean about a mass of proceedings—for example, the establishment of Standing Committees. That is another bigger question with which we must deal. I have stated my view on this matter before. I have changed my view in the past 35 years. One is entitled to do that.

It has been said that if this is a temporary procedure, we shall not be able to take advantage of the latest technology. I am therefore in favour of hon. Members deciding that this measure shall be permanent. To those hon. Members and the people who have written recently about this and who believe that once we start this as a temporary proceeding we shall never stop it, I say that is absolutely right. Once the proceedings of the House are televised, we shall never be able to stop it. We must therefore face the fact that it will be permanent. Let us have the most modern technology straight away and do the job properly. I hope that the Select Committee will bear that in mind.

We come to the question of laying down the guidelines. I have said that I want the permanent televising of all the proceedings of this Chamber as well as of Select Committees. We cannot have a guideline that says that the cameras will show only the hon. Member who happens to be speaking. The public want to see the whole of the Chamber throughout the proceedings. All the arguments that have been raised against that can be raised against having the public in the Strangers' Gallery. Only a few members of the public sit through the whole of a daily sitting of this House. Are we to say they cannot get a proper perspective of this House and that they can be admitted only if they undertake to listen to all the proceedings throughout the day? Of course not.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Come off it.

Mr. Heath: There is no point in my hon. Friend sitting there reflecting and muttering, "Come off it."

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: If my right hon. Friend talks nonsense, I shall say so.

Mr. Heath: I say to my hon. Friend that the best reflectors do not mutter, "Come off it."

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I wish that my right hon. Friend would come off it.

Mr. Faulds: The right hon. Gentleman has just put forward an inappropriate analogy. The members of the public, whom we never notice in this place, come and go as they wish. They stay as long as they want to. They push of when they want a cup of tea or a bun. The difference in the television presentation, if the cameras come in here, is that the selectivity will be made not by the public coming and going, but by chaps who have political interests to pursue, who have the old-boy network to trade on and who want to represent a certain attitude of Members of the House, not the complete representation of the enormous mixed feeling of the majority of the House on any issue at all.

Mr. Heath: It is not Privy Councillors who take up the time of the House. Yes, the cameras will come and go as they please, just like the public. I have no anxieties and fears about that.

Of course, I have been irritated, frustrated and, at times, infuriated by television. We must accept that. I am not prepared to say that on balance television in this country is not the best in the world. It is the best and, on the whole, the fairest. The House should accept that.

A point about "two minutes' time" has been mentioned. I believe that interest in the proceedings of the House will develop to such an extent that television will give much more time to those proceedings.

Mr. Graham Bright (Luton, South): The radio does not.

Mr. Heath: Radio gives more time. It covers the whole of Prime Minister's Question Time. If the public's interest is in the House, television will cover it.

[Mr. Heath]

It is said that television will concentrate on particular incidents. Of course it will. If the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who is sitting opposite, jumps up and threatens Mr. Speaker, we all look at the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why pick on me?

Mr. Heath: The public will look at the hon. Gentleman.

If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence dashes over and picks up the Mace, everyone looks at him. Of course they do. Who is to say that the television cameras must not look at him? That is trying to put television into a straitjacket. I remember very well when an hon. Lady rushed from the Opposition Benches and hit Mr. Maudling. I remember that vividly because I thought that she was going to hit me. She could not stretch as far as that, so she had to make do with him. Of course that would be shown on television. It is right that it should, because it shows the public that some people feel deeply about an issue and want to draw attention to it. Why should the public not know about that? Why should television not cover it? Of course it should.

I remind hon. Members of what happened in the 1950s. In those days it was laid down that no current affairs programme on television could cover any issue to be debated in this House or the House of Lords within a fortnight of the occurrence. For a fortnight television was silenced on anything that was to be discussed in the House. Can anyone imagine that happening today? Of course, that broke down over time. The House has always been slow to accommodate itself to the requirements of public opinion and technology. It is inconceivable that we could treat television in that way today. It is inconceivable that we can continue to treat it as we do at the moment and prevent it from covering the proceedings of the House.

Contrary to what has been said by many hon. Members, I believe that today television and, to a lesser extent, radio are the only firm guarantee of individual freedom in this country. The press which claimed to be so for so long is no longer the guardian of freedom in this country. The power of the press proprietors in this country has never been greater than it is today.

There are those who have said that television will pick out individuals, perhaps for ridicule. I saw one columnist over the weekend who said that people would see hon. Members lying on the Benches and may think that they are asleep; they will not realise that all that those hon. Members are doing is putting their heads against the microphones which are hidden in the backs of the seats. Very well, let us explain to the public that there are microphones in the back of the seats and that Members who appear to be asleep are not asleep. When they are asleep, it should be explained that they are asleep, or they should go and sleep somewhere else.

It is only because press columnists have suddenly realised that this motion will probably be carried tonight that there is this great outburst against the proceedings of the House being televised. It is said that television might try to make fools of us. What do the parliamentary correspondents do in the press day after day? The sole purpose of the parliamentary correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* every day is to ridicule what goes on in the House.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): But they are brilliant.

Mr. Heath: My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) was never a parliamentary correspondent; he was a Lobby correspondent.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Why pick on me?

Mr. Heath: We should look at the last but one parliamentary correspondent of *The Times*. His sole purpose was to do in politicians. He declared it openly; he told me so. He said that politicians were pompous people who should be destroyed. I told him that in the process he would run the risk of also destroying Parliament. That was too bad.

Any idea that the press today guarantees the freedom of the individual in this country has now become a fallacy and a farce. The one opportunity the public have of judging what we are really like and really say is on television.

By allowing the televising of our proceedings we shall go a long way towards providing once again a guarantee of individual freedom. The public will be able to judge politicians and our political institutions. That is the second principal reason why I so strongly support the permanent televising of all the proceedings of this House.

4.37 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) touched upon a subject on which he will find considerable agreement in many parts of the House when he pointed to the dangers that now exist in the press and the extent to which we rely upon television. Television has brought great events into the homes of many people. It has given rise to great movements. The enormous British reaction against famine in the Third world owed almost everything to the television pictures in people's homes. I agree with him that television has a great role to play in safeguarding individual rights not just in Great Britain but in many other countries — including, of course, South Africa where there is a determined attempt to prevent television from reporting what is happening.

The right hon. Gentleman and many of my hon. Friends have been advocating the televising of the proceedings of this Chamber for many years. During that time, the press and broadcasting have changed significantly. We must now assess the issue in a slightly different climate. Even with the interests that have been shown in this debate, it would be hard to suggest that today's argument bears any relationship to the public interest in the breakdown a few weeks ago of negotiations between the Football Association and the television companies.

The day is past when anyone assumed that the televising of Parliament would make a huge and dramatic impact and bring about changes. The case for television is straightforward and logical. The proceedings of this House should be open to the public. The public is admitted to our proceedings in person in the form of people who write for the newspapers and in the form of radio microphones. Ultimately, I believe that it will be admitted also in the form of the television camera. Those are proper means of public access which make that access a great deal more widely available. We must set those factors against a background slightly different from that against which the right hon. Gentleman and many of my hon. Friends have

argued for television cameras over the years. There has clearly been a decline in what we call the Gallery reporting of Parliament—the extent to which newspapers report our debates and seek to set out what is said. If that were true when Aneurin Bevan made the comments quoted by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), it is much more true now.

Only two or perhaps three serious newspapers have regular Gallery columns, reporting systematically the proceedings of the House. The reports seem to get shorter and shorter and occupy less and less space. The rest of the reporting of Parliament, apart from the news contributions of political correspondents and the parliamentary sketches, which themselves have changed, depends on the occasional line here and there. We see the odd significant or outrageous comment reported in the popular newspapers.

The parliamentary sketch has changed in character. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred to sketch writers such as Frank Johnson. I do not criticise the appearance of sketches like that, which are entertaining and funny, but they have supplanted a different type of reporting. There used to be a serious attempt to portray a parliamentary debate as a supplement to the straight report of what was said in the debate. That was a traditional role of the parliamentary sketch, but is has largely disappeared.

This considerable change in press reporting has been reflected in broadcasting. Hon. Members must remember the row there was when "Yesterday in Parliament" changed its character from a straightforward report of the previous day's proceedings to a report in which there was a great deal of interpretation and comment. The programme has settled down after the initial period of being jazzed up, but it lost much as a straightforward report of our debates and deserved many of the early criticisms made of it.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): The hon. Gentleman has been speaking for about five minutes and the House has been listening to him with great interest. I suggest that an editorial director of a television programme would feature the comments of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) about his dress and the Queen Mother's remark upon it, and the observations of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), rather than take up the interesting remarks of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). That is what worries me. It may be good for debate, but not for television.

Mr. Beith: Those are the facts of life. They will happen tomorrow without the House being televised, but because of them we have to ask questions about how the televising of the House might be carried out. The motion, with its reference to the appointment of a Select Committee, gives rise to important arguments which we must put in the minds of the members of the Select Committee, and which the Committee must consider and bring back to the House.

Some issues came to light in the Lords experiment. People have commented in different ways on that experiment, but the Hansard Society produced an interesting brief interim report in which it made comments about balance. It referred first to a debate initiated by the Official Opposition which was not given the appropriate political balance; the role of the Official Opposition was not properly described. The Hansard Society also said:

> "The Alliance might well be aggrieved by the coverage of the two debates they initiated on 15 May. In the coverage of the first debate on trade union balloting the Liberals were allotted 40 seconds out of a four-minute slot on 'Newsnight' and 50 seconds out of a 15 minute edition of 'Their Lordships' House'."

How the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent could regard that as in any way fair I do not understand. The report of the Hansard Society says:

> "The debate on the strategic defence initiative and NATO, which was initiated by the SDP, received no direct coverage. The Cross Benches also have been particularly under-represented in television coverage."

Although there is no direct analogy to the Cross Benches in this House, it is a reminder to Back Benchers of all parties of the problems that will be posed if television coverage of this House has no adequate outlet in television programmes. It is to that point that I am brought by those considerations.

It all depends on whether there is an adequate outlet in television programmes for the material which comes from the House and how that outlet is used by those who do the editing. If I take issue with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, it is on his failure to recognise that the television screen is not the same as someone observing the proceedings from the Strangers' Gallery. The small screen in the corner of the room will cover only a portion of the action in time and in vision. Therefore, the editing role will be important. The importance of the editing role will increase enormously if the amount of time available is limited. If time is limited, what will we see? We will probably see Prime Minister's Question Time. That was what happened in the radio programme. For a long time, the emphasis was on Prime Minister's Question Time. Eventually, it was taken off because there was so much noise that it became an unpopular feature of our proceedings.

Viscount Cranborne (Dorset, South): Is the hon. Gentleman not saying that that kind of war is too important to be left to journalists? Might not his objections be overcome with the aid of modern technology and the allocation of one channel entirely to the proceedings of the House, without the interference of editing? If the public were bored by it, they could switch off.

Mr. Beith: I should like to see that, but I do not think that option is on offer. Television coverage on a special channel should not exclude the additional use of material from the House in news and current affairs programmes if it is used properly. It would be complementary to such provision.

If the emphasis were to be on Prime Minister's Question Time, the difficulty of fairness becomes apparent. That has not been shown up in the Lords experiment, because there is no equivalent to Prime Minister's Question Time. How can Prime Minister's Question Time be portrayed fairly if the Prime Minister can be asked two, three or even four questions from the Opposition Front Bench, without the Leader of the Opposition having any difficulty in being called, and only one question is permitted from this Bench?

It would be very difficult to give a fair presentation of political argument. Anyone watching on television at home might wonder why the Liberal Member who had asked a question did not put a supplementary question. The answer is that our procedure does not allow that. The same applies to Back Benchers. Prime Minister's Question Time, as it operates, does not afford an opportunity to

[Mr. Beith]

anyone except the Leader of the Opposition to follow up a point which has been raised. That is a defect in our proceedings, but it will make it difficult to show Prime Minister's Question Time as anything other than a Punch and Judy show; I do not assign those roles necessarily on a sexually stereotype basis.

Again, when there are statements, the statement from the Government Front Bench is followed by a supposed question from the Opposition Front Bench, often longer than the original statement and raising a houseful of issues, whereas other hon. Members, including the representative of a similarly large section of opinion, can raise only one or two points in the briefest of interventions. Statements will be difficult to portray fairly.

Similarly, what will happen in a major debate—the great occasion when a speech from the Government Front Bench is followed by a speech from the Opposition Front Bench? The temptation will be to stop the television coverage and go on to another programme rather than continue to report the speeches of the party which I represent or of Back Benchers of different points of view.

The Select Committee, if given the opportunity to do so, must consider within what context of programming the televising of the House will be permitted. It would be much easier to present a distorted and limited pattern on television than on radio. Radio affords more opportunities for coverage of the output from the House than television programmes.

I do not think that we can take the Lords experiment as entirely convincing, because it has taken place wholly during a period within which the broadcasters were hoping to be able to televise this House. It is my view that a daily programme on the House of Lords on both BBC and ITV —initially it was only on ITV—was transmitted only because the television companies wanted ultimately to come into this House. I may be cynical in that view, but I do not believe that the House of Lords would have had its daily diet of televising had there not been the hope that the cameras would come into this House.

The Select Committee will have a major job to do, including consideration of the technical problems which will arise from the televising of the House, such as the placing of the lights and the siting of the cameras. I support the suggestion that there should be remote control cameras rather than having cameramen scattered about the House. There will be technical problems with the microphone system, which is 40 years old.

Mr. Skinner: You are using a new one.

Mr. Beith: I sometimes wonder in which museum was found this microphone that has been added to the system to make it slightly more efficient. The microphone system has been in the Chamber since it was built and it would need to be examined. As well as technical problems, there are the issues of fairness and balance of presentation and output to be considered by the Select Committee.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that there is already a form of censorship and that we already depend on editing? Complete pieces of legislation which are not considered interesting by the Lobby are not reported. Even when the House is full, hon. Members discover that the value judgments of those in the press lobby are not the same as those of hon. Members representing their constituents.

Mr. Beith: I believe that that is so. That is another reason why I stress so much the need for the Select Committee to consider what opportunities for broadcasting the material will be available. The programmes of debates in the other place are important, and we could have an equivalent system. I may have been cynical about the reasons for the programmes' appearance, but they are good in general and well put together by the professional broadcasters involved. If we have television in this place, we should have an assurance that, each day the House sits, there will be a proper programme such as "Today in Parliament" giving an account of the proceedings, conducted on a fair basis. If we allowed television to proceed without that condition, we should be allowing the opportunity to slip to give what television should be able to give the people — the opportunity to see what is actually happening in Parliament, not an over-selective and limited picture.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): The hon. Gentleman is making an important point. Is he suggesting that the Select Committee should look at the right of Mr. Speaker to select those who speak? That will not change with television. None of us would want that to change. Is he suggesting that the business of the House, which is arranged through the usual channels, sometimes including discussions with the hon. Gentleman's party, should change? None of those things is of any concern to the new Select Committee. Its job would be simply to decide whether the House as it is should be broadcast, not whether the House should change its methods to suit the broadcasters.

Mr. Beith: The Select Committee will have to face that question one way or the other. If the broadcasters were to select from our debates—for example, if they took the first hour of a debate as at present arranged and constituted —there is no way in which they could discharge their obligation of fairness either to my party or, for that matter, to the hon. Gentleman, who frequently speaks at later stages in debates and makes cogent criticism of Government policy. If the pattern were to cover only one hour of the debate, such a view would be wholly omitted.

Hon. Members would be foolish if they ignored those aspects of the problem. I do not share the view of those who say that, because there are such difficulties, we must not allow television into this place. That is wrong. It was as wrong to say that about the admission of the public as it was of the press and radio.

If we are concerned, and if one of the arguments for bringing television into this place is that the public debate of the nation will be brought into people's homes the more fully to inform them of what is going on in the House, we must ensure that the basis on which it is done makes that possible. To some extent, that involves the way in which we organise our proceedings as well as the extent to which broadcasters have the freedom, in terms of the time available to them, to draw from our proceedings and give a fair and accurate report.

There is a three-way political debate in the country at the moment. If television, when it comes into the House,

tries to portray something different, it will give a totally false picture, and I believe that it will be rejected by the public.

4.53 pm

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): I agree with many of the cautionary remarks of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). One thing is absolutely plain and certain. If television cameras are introduced into the House, it will never be the same again. If we agree to that move, things will change, and we shall have to accept the change.

It may be known to you, Mr. Speaker, that in a sense I wear two hats. I have announced that I shall not stand at the next election and I have an almost total interest in the electronic media—television and radio—which I freely declare.

Were I outside the House today, I should be speaking energetically in favour of televising its proceedings, but my responsibility, which I feel as a Member of the House, is to say with great respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes), who so ably moved her motion, that today is not the time and this is not the right motion to accept, because the time will come.

Right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the evolution to press reporting. There is a check and balance against press reporting. It is called *Hansard*—the verbatim, written-down word of everything said in the House. I suggest that the same has to apply to television. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Viscount Cranborne) made that point. However, it has been claimed that a channel for Parliament might not be available yet. If not, we must wait for it, because the word that I used —"inaccuracy"—when I intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Drake was meant as no insult or slight to the professional editors of television or radio news. It was meant to describe the inevitable effect of television programming.

Television can never be truly real or truthful. The two-dimensional lens followed by the pair of eyes of the camera man and directed by the director in the Gallery cannot do anything else but select, and selectivity has to mean, in the nicest way, a form of censorship. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said that he wanted to see the whole House in operation. I agree with him. Unfortunately, at this time that cannot be achieved to a satisfactory degree.

Were the motion an attempt to set up a Select Committee in more general terms—not to mount an experiment — we might make considerably more progress because in a matter of years, as technology advances—it may be five or 10 years—considerable progress in cabling, which has already started, will be made. When cable is covering many households, that insurance channel can be there, putting out to the people who want it every mortal and, dare I say, sometimes boring word uttered in the House. That is the check and balance against the inevitability of the technique of editing news bulletins such as "Today in Parliament" and "Yesterday in Parliament". If we go down the path that has been suggested, with luck five Back Benchers might get one minute or one and a half minutes every night at 11.30. If that is so, where is the advantage to Back Benchers of being seen frequently by their constituents? Will not the criticism be, "Why are they not seen more often"?

I turn from the personal and political advantages to individual Members to the advantages or disadvantages to the House. I see disadvantage that ultimately has to be surmounted. The televising of the House is inevitable some time, but not yet. The disadvantage is that this is a serious House. I have suggested that television can never be truly real. Others have rightly suggested that television is basically entertainment, illusion and impression. Let us use the illusion, impression, entertainment and excitement that television can bring in the right way and with the right consideration.

If we had an experiment, the first inevitable thing would be that we could not contemplate remote-controlled cameras. It has already been said that they would be too expensive. Will we seriously consider allowing gentlemen or ladies—there are camera women as well—standing behind cameras in three different positions in the Chamber on Budget day or during Prime Minister's Question Time? We would all trip over them, or they would trip over us, but either way it would create chaos. If there were cameras in the Gallery, that would be no good to the broadcasters because all that they would get would be the tops of our heads. Although our faces may not sometimes entertain the public as much as we would like, the tops of our heads might be even worse.

I should like to sum up my feelings. Eventually we must televise the House of Commons. We took it slowly when we allowed the press to come in. We invented a check and balance against the press. Let us do the same for television, because the way in which we introduced radio broadcasting has done nothing but bring the House into public disrepute.

4.59 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) is the first hon. Member to make a speech of opposition. It was interesting for the House to hear him, but the argument that selection is inevitably censorship cannot be applied to television alone. The essence of publication is selection. The problem of editorship is relevant and difficult for all the media, not just for television.

I have long taken the view that entertainment is inevitable in the reporting of the proceedings of Parliament. A wider view includes the responsibilities imposed on the BBC by the charter. The duty of the BBC is to instruct, educate and entertain. If those three elements lie within the terms of reference of any serious body reporting the proceedings of Parliament, many of the difficulties envisaged by the hon. Gentleman would not occur—or at least not to the extent that he fears.

The motion moved by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) has been welcomed by the House, but from the many interventions it is clear that she does not command universal support although, as she said, the motion is couched in modest terms. The motion is modest because it seeks the approval of the House in principle to the holding of an experiment in the public broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings and to establishing a Select Committee to consider the implementation of that experiment.

Most hon. Members will be voting not merely on the principle of holding an experiment, but on the desirability of bringing television permanently into the House of Commons. That was made clear in the speech of the right hon. Member for Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

[Mr. Peter Shore]

I must make it plain that I am speaking for myself, and that there is no party view. My right hon. and hon. Friends will vote tonight as their judgment and conscience dictate. I assume that similar freedom has been accorded to Conservative Members. I am now free to say that I am in favour of televising the proceedings of the House. Like others, I am mindful of the great battle fought nearly 200 years ago to open up our proceedings to a wider public. That battle was finally won in 1803, when newspaper journalists were permitted to take notes and report parliamentary proceedings. More recently, in 1978, the House agreed that sound broadcasting should be introduced on a permanent basis. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House are far from satisfied with the press or sound radio coverage. They have made that clear in their interventions and speeches. However, only a small minority would support a proposition to banish either the microphones or the reporter's pen from the House today. Once an experiment has been undertaken, the same will apply to television.

By giving access to the press, radio and television, the House is responding to the major changes in mass communications that have transformed our society in many ways. Television is the most influential of the media. Hardly a home is without a television set. People spend many hours watching television programmes, including those on current and political affairs in all their diversity. It is strange and even paradoxical that elected members of Parliament and elected Governments, who are constantly dealing with communication and persuasion, should deny themselves the opportunity of communicating direct with the British public through this almost universal media.

We have heard the main arguments against voting for this modest motion. I wish to deal with them in three main groups. First, there are fears that the televising of Parliament will damage the reputation of the House. That concern is expressed in the amendment on the Order Paper in the names of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) and his hon. Friends. The amendment of the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) expresses the belief that television

"would only trivialise and sensationalise the serious purposes of this place".

There are two strands of thought about trivialisation. One is the possible effect that television would have on hon. Members, and the other relates to the behaviour of the broadcasting authorities. I do not believe that the presence of television would encourage or provoke behaviour by hon. Members that would damage the reputation of the House. That is not because all hon. Members are perfectly behaved now, or will be in the future, but rather that the conduct of hon. Members reflects their dispositions and personalities. Those are expressed regardless of the presence or absence of the microphone or the camera.

I do not wish to be partisan in choosing an incident, but my most vivid recollection of disorderly conduct was when the present Secretary of State for Defence seized the Mace and waved it in the air. There were no televison cameras to incite that action, and radio had not been introduced into the Chamber. It happened, and it could happen again, but I do not believe that television will make any difference.

The second strand of the anxiety relates not to the effect of televison cameras on the behaviour of hon. Members, but to the danger of selective reporting and trivialising the reporting of the proceedings of the House by the broadcasting authorities. That is a danger, although it would not arise if major statements and debates were continuously reported, when the problem of selection and editing does not occur. We agree on that. However, we are not defenceless against the BBC or ITV if they offend.

Mr. Heffer: My right hon. Friend has put forward important and fair arguments. In the so-called report of Parliament on the radio in the morning, for example, we hear not only what hon. Members say and debate, but the interjections of a journalist, who says what he thinks and makes snide comments about what the hon. Member may or may not be doing. If there was a clear guarantee that there would be straightforward reporting and nothing else, I should have no objection, but it will not be so. We are faced with the manipulation of the media, as we have been by the Gallery and the radio.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend has made a fair point. The answer is that it is for us to impose conditions and a code of conduct on the broadcasting authorities. Those who understand the business of the Select Committees that were set up to study the introduction of sound radio, and the recent House of Lords Committee on television before its introduction there, will know that a number of basic guidelines are laid down and have been accepted by both television authorities.

Mr. Ashton: One of the worst things to come out of politics in recent years has been the growth of the personality cult—the building up of the Derek Hattons, Arthur Scargills and Ken Livingstones, or whoever the media chose to build up into a film star, only to knock them down later on. How can the House stop or control that?

Mr. Shore: The cult of the personality was established not only here but elsewhere long before any suggestion was made about the use of television. Obviously we cannot deal with events outside the House. All that we are concerned with is televising and the rules that may guide the televising of the proceedings of this House. The code of conduct backed up by resolutions of the House applied before the 1978 sound broadcasting experiment was made. Among other things, the code specifically excludes the broadcasting authorities from using material drawn from either House of Parliament for any purpose of entertainment in other programmes. There must be no coverage of interruptions from the Strangers' Gallery, and no use of material drawn from the proceedings for party-political broadcasts.

A point made to the Select Committee on Broadcasting by the Attorney-General is that there are specific penalties, and it would be a contempt of the House if the broadcasting material was tampered with or falsified for the record. Further guidance has been given, and those who have studied the Select Committee report that preceded the televising of the House of Lords debates will realise that guidance is given about such matters as the

focus of the camera. It is generally accepted that the House of Lords has had a successful and constructive experience of televised broadcasting.

There is a further safeguard. To those who say that the Lords experiment was simply a case of seeing the broadcasting authorities on their best behaviour, the answer surely is that as long as we retain supervision and control through a Select Committee that will monitor and review what is going on, we will always be free to change the arrangements if we seriously believe that the reputation of either the House is being damaged by current practices. The other major anxiety which has frequently been expressed, and which was expressed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), is about the political impartiality of the broadcasting authorities.

From time to time there are genuine grievances, but most of us accept that in the news coverage of parliamentary proceedings, and in such programmes as "Today in Parliament"—although I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) about "Yesterday in Parliament", the one that follows it—selection is carried out as impartially and as fairly as we can reasonably expect. The obligation to be impartial is in the charter of the BBC and is a statutory obligation upon the IBA. I am sure that the Select Committee will consider that most fully, but if we are not satisfied on that score the alternative of setting up a separate parliamentary broadcasting unit is available to us. That deserves the most serious study.

The third and least important of the objections that we have heard relates to the physical intrusiveness of the television cameras. The House of Lords' experiment was undertaken by, I believe, four manned cameras, and an early experiment in the House of Commons would probably require manned cameras as well. In addition, televising of the House would result in an undoubted rise in temperature caused by the lighting. That is certainly unwelcome, but here, too, the experience of the House of Lords is far less unhappy on that count than was expected. Looking only a little way ahead, there is the prospect of remote control cameras and less obstrusive lighting. Those things are not far off.

These anxieties have to be set against the more positive arguments in favour of televising our proceedings. First, it will bring the House into direct contact with the great majority of the homes in this nation. It is certainly not over-optimistic to believe that the level of understanding of issues and the involvement of people in the political process would be considerably enhanced.

The three main functions of this House—statements on Government policy and the cross-examination of Ministers that follows; the presentation of the grievances of the nation, which is the essence of the Opposition Supply days; and the introduction of legislation—are of intrinsic interest either to majorities or to large minorities of the public. The size of audiences cannot be easily predicted, but even the late night reports of the proceedings in the House of Lords attracted audiences of roughly one third of a million, and those debates were late at night. Debates on major issues attracted far larger audiences.

Our proceedings are not adequately reported by the press, and here I echo what was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). Many papers give only a sporadic coverage to the affairs of the House, and others, when they do report it, do so with a strong partisan flavour, reflecting either editorial or proprietorial bias. Television will give us more, and less biased, coverage.

Secondly, there is a growing tendency, simply because the House is not televised, for major political debates to be arranged in the television studios. Those debates are governed entirely by rules laid down by the television producers, and the participants are selected entirely by them. A shift of interest away from this Chamber has resulted, and it has affected both the reputation of the House in terms of public esteem, and the level of attendance and interest of hon. Members themselves in the proceedings.

It is in the interests of the House and of the public outside, and also in the interests of strengthening our domestic process, that we should now accept the televising of Parliament.

5.16 pm

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I oppose the motion. It was generally thought before this debate that the motion would be carried, and some people thought it would be won quite easily. So far, we have heard six speeches and I am not being unfair when I say that the best speech was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton), who knows more about this subject than any other hon. Member. I cannot remember on how many occasions I have opposed the televising of the House, but obviously this debate today is the most vital occasion of all. My sole purpose is to appeal to those who have not already made up their minds to listen to what I have to say. I ask those who are in favour to think again.

I realise how strong the pressures are to bring the lights and the cameras and all the other paraphernalia into this Chamber. Some hon. Members will say it is an inevitable trend of the times. Some will even claim it as progress and others will say that, even if we stop it this time, eventually it is bound to come. Surely we in this House have a free will. We do not believe that history is predetermined; therefore, our decisions here should surely shape our future. I also fully appreciate the strength of the media lobby outside and inside the House. I am talking not just about those people who may have some connection with television or journalism, but about those who believe that television is the most important thing in our lives—so good that it ought to be here.

Television should not cover every facet of our national life. For example, few people would advocate cameras going into the courts. The trial and possibly the sentencing of fellow citizens is considered by most people to be too serious a subject for the screen. Similarly, our business here is too serious to be covered by television reporting as we know it today, however skilful and unbiased that reporting may be. Essentially, the purpose of television is to entertain. As I have often said, television is, in essence, a branch of show business. No matter how absurd or comical our proceedings may sometimes be, we are generally about the state of the nation, which is not a form of entertainment.

Television must entertain, or viewers will switch off. The proceedings of the other place were televised only fairly occasionally and often late at night. There were only about 250,000 viewers because, I believe, unlike us, the Lords have no constituents and generally conduct their affairs in a rather graver and quieter manner. Television

[Mr. John Stokes]

producers in here would be bound to go for the scenes, the rows, the conflicts and the occasions when somebody is named by Mr. Speaker. They would not be interested in about 90 per cent. of our business or in the work of Select Committees.

Television in here would alter utterly the character of the place, and for ever. Some hon. Members would crowd into the Chamber the moment the lights were on to ensure that their faces were on the screen. They would try to speak more, they would put down more questions, and they would interrupt more—anything to get in on the act. We have already heard that the broadcasting of Prime Minister's Question Time has harmed the occasion and damaged the institution of Parliament. Why? Because of the gladiatorial nature of that quarter of an hour twice a week, which is by no means typical of how we spend most of our time.

I realise that there might be advantages for my party in televising the House but I shall not go into that. The issue is greater than party advantage. Once the die is cast and the cameras, lights and camera crews are here, even for a so-called experimental or trial period, it will be very hard to get them out again. Can we imagine a Select Committee meeting night and day worrying all the time, wet towels on heads, trying to monitor the performance of the producers? It is quite impractical and we know it.

Television would also alter the timetable and the tenor of our proceedings. Important debates would no longer start at 3.30 pm but would be timed to start at peak viewing times after the tea has been eaten at 6.30 pm, and those who speak will be chosen for their ability to speak and for their photogenic qualities. [*Laughter.*] These are serious matters. Our dress and appearance would alter. There would be a great temptation for certain lady hon. Members to wear pretty hats—and why not? Viewers might, I am afraid, be more concerned with the length of their skirts than with the length of their speeches.

We know that people tend to behave differently the moment that the cameras are upon them. For example, the presence of television cameras often provokes riots. Goodness knows what their presence would do here. If an hon. Member unfortunately picks his nose or inadvertently drops off to sleep during a boring speech, the cameras will be on him at once. Those admirable hon. Members who are so assiduous in Committee and so attentive to their constituents, who travel on the Government's business and who attend our debates regularly but who rarely speak, would be forced to try to address the House often. Think what a nightmare it would be if all right hon. and hon. Members tried always to catch Mr. Speaker's eye. It is difficult enough to do so now.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Is my hon. Friend most against change or most against innovation?

Mr. Stokes: I think that I am against change and innovation. We should hold on to what is good and not try to change everything every second—certainly not the Tory party.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) is a great House of Commons man, but, despite what he said, I believe that the cameras would change the intimacy of debate here. The cut and thrust would go. Instead of addressing each other, we should be on a giant hustings addressing the 55 million people of these islands. I dread to think what might happen. Hon. Members might feel that they had to alter their hairstyle or wear make-up. Would we all have to be coached in the art of making suitable gestures? Would the amateur and professional actors among us come even more to the fore?

Hard reflection shows that the dangers and difficulties are immense. The longer that this debate goes on, the more those difficulties and dangers will become apparent. I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members who love this place, its history, all that it has stood for and the position in which it is held in this country and throughout the world will not put the whole lot at risk by bringing in all the trappings of a non-stop variety show.

5.25 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I should like to compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) on her introduction of this subject. The House has anticipated this debate for some months now. I owe the House an exposition of the history of the issue and the central role that the Select Committee would play. I also owe it the obligation of brevity.

As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has reminded us, the matter was raised as long ago as 1959 in the debate on the Loyal Address by the then Member for Ebbw Vale, Aneurin Bevan. Since then, the House has had several opportunities to consider the matter, and did so most recently when the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) gave the House, in his ten-minute Bill of 2 November 1983, an opportunity to consider the establishment of a parliamentary television unit to maintain an electronic *Hansard*. His motion to have leave to bring in the Bill was passed by 165 votes to 159 but, as is the way with Bills introduced under that procedure, it failed to reach the statute book.

Since that debate, some interest in the subject has doubtless been confirmed by the experiment in another place. On 27 November last year, it was decided to hold a six-month experiment in televising proceedings. Hon. Members may have seen for themselves the results of that decision and be able to make their own judgments about it. Since the end of that six months, the decision has been to continue with the experiment until a permanent system has been approved or rejected. I acknowledge immediately that our own procedures and physical surroundings are very different from those in another place. It would be facile to draw a neat comparison between the two.

As for the proposal to establish a Select Committee to examine and report on the modalities of televising our Chamber, I noted what my hon. Friend the Member for Drake said about bringing forward a motion to establish such a Select Committee with the normal powers, to consider the televising of our proceedings, and particularly the experiment, and I confirm that, if today's motion is carried, we will be proposing a motion to establish a Select Committee with the normal powers as soon as is convenient.

The decision in another place to hold the experiment was taken after a Select Committee had reported, and its conclusions had been debated. There has already been discussion today about referring the question to a Select Committee of this House. I believe that this is the only sensible way for us to consider fully the implications and technicalities of an experiment.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman clarify my understanding of the motion? It appears that, if we take a decision in principle, the Select Committee's duty thereafter is to proceed towards implementation—the decision on televising the House having been taken this evening, implementation will be carried out subject to details considered by the Select Committee. Is the right hon. Gentleman saying that that principle does not apply and that we shall have a second bite before a final decision is taken?

Mr. Biffen: The short answer is yes, but if the hon. Gentleman will bear with me for the next few moments he will find that that point is answered in my speech.

If the House so resolved, it would be the Select Committee that would hear and reflect upon all the technical and editorial anxieties. It would be the report of the Select Committee that would outline how an experiment could proceed. At that moment, the debate of principle would be joined by consideration of practicalities. No experiment could proceed without the House endorsing the Select Committee observations.

The issue is so important that I believe that a new Select Committee should be set up so that its Members can be chosen by the House to reflect the range of views which are held about the many different aspects of a televising experiment. That in no way undermines the work of the Select Committee on Sound Broadcasting under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart). Members of that Committee will have much to contribute to our future discussions on this topic because of the expertise and experience that they already have in this and related matters.

The unique nature of the prospect before us leads me also to believe that the House of Commons (Services) Committee would not be the appropriate group to look at all the facets of an experiment and that a new Committee is required. Without seeking to pre-empt the work of the Committee in any way, it may be helpful to the House if I suggest two major factors among many that I believe that it would wish to consider. I have heard the broadcasters' preliminary thoughts on these two matters, as there was informal discussion with them before this debate.

On the type of experiment and equipment to be used the broadcasters suggest a six to 12-week experiment, with equipment continuously based in the Chamber. For an experiment, they would be content to pay for cameras and staff between them but would look to the House to provide the cabling and lighting required. That is the basis on which the experiment was agreed in another place. The costs to the Property Services Agency for the experiment in another place amounted to £25,000. The financial arrangements for any permanent system of televising the House would, of course, be a separate matter.

The Select Committee would doubtless wish to look at the effects of television cameras continously inside the Chamber. As I understand it, much would depend on the type of camera used for the experiment. Manned cameras on the Floor of the House would enable an experiment to proceed most expeditiously but would represent the greatest intrusion. Remote-controlled cameras would require more time both before they were available and for their installation. Another possibility might be cameras mounted under the Gallery and controlled by cameramen seated in the Gallery, or a combination of manned and remote-controlled cameras. It would be for the Select Committee to weigh the merits of these and other suggestions.

Another aspect which would physically affect the Chamber would be the provision of extra lighting. In our previous debates on this subject, it seemed possible that a system requiring no additional lighting could be developed. I understand that this is not now believed to be the case, and that while some additional lighting might be set up outside the Chamber more powerful lighting under the Gallery would still be required. This is something which the Select Committee would want to look at in detail when there had been an opportunity for tests to be carried out inside the Chamber.

The physical differences which televising equipment in the Chamber would bring are clearly not the only aspect that needs consideration. The effects outside the Palace would be at least as great. Particularly important would be the effect on the way in which the House is perceived. This would depend largely on the type of programme proposed and the balance contained in the coverage. Both the BBC and the independent broadcasters would suggest live coverage of major occasions, a daily summary of proceedings, use of material in a wide range of news and current affairs programmes and coverage in the regions concentrating on local issues and Members.

The broadcasters assert that they appreciate the importance of presenting a balanced picture of the work of the House. By balance, I mean not merely the way in which the different parties are treated and the amount of time and coverage that they receive but also the division of time between Back Benchers and Front Bench spokesmen. Consideration must also be given to the type of occasion which is broadcast, either in full or in part. They recognise that, for example, Prime Minister's Question Time alone would not be an acceptable representation of the standard of debate or behaviour in the Chamber. They believe that, as in the experiment in another place, they should have editorial control of the material to be broadcast.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): That is censorship.

Mr. Biffen: It would be for the Select Committee to look at the responsibility that this places on the broadcasters, and to recommend whether it would be acceptable would be one of the Committee's most significant tasks. As with all these considerations, I must emphasise that the ultimate decision would lie with the House.

Finally, I should like to say a word about the time scale. If the Select Committee were to report in the spring of next year, we would hope to give the House the opportunity to decide on the recommendations and to discuss the report soon after Easter. If the decision then was to proceed with an experiment, there would be a delay of some weeks before it could start, to allow for installation of cameras and lighting. Just how long this would take would depend on the type of experiment recommended by the Select Committee and endorsed by the House.

I would envisage, however, that the most optimistic timetable would be for the experiment to start in the last weeks before the summer recess. Caution inclines me to believe that a more realistic possibility is for the

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experiment to begin at the start of the new Session next year. Following the experiment, I would expect the Select Committee to make a further report to the House later next year, offering recommendations to the House as to whether we should proceed to a permanent system of televising proceedings and the form that this might take. The House would then have an opportunity to vote on the matter. That is just an outline of what seems the shortest possible time scale. The Select Committee would, of course, be able to make recommendations about this and other aspects of an experiment.

Finally, I should say briefly how I shall be voting. I believe that a Parliament seeking popular support for its authority should not foreswear what is probably the most effective popular form of communication. Of course we cannot know what the effects will be. A decision to televise is probably as fundamental to Parliament in its implications as was Disraeli's 1867 Reform Bill, which almost doubled the size of the electorate. Like that Bill, it is a leap in the dark. I believe that we have to take that leap, but I remain optimistic enough to believe that this institution can adapt to television and not be mastered by it.

5.38 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): The most popular television programme featuring politicians must be "Spitting Image", judging from the size of the audience that it attracts. I shall vote against the proposal tonight because I believe that politicians will ultimately end up as the nation's clowns, portrayed as they are in "Spitting Image". That will happen if we allow television producers to take control of the proceedings, because they are interested only in mass audience figures.

I mentioned earlier the growth of the personality cult and named a few people who have been built up out of all proportion by television. I served on Sheffield city council for seven years. In those days councillors never appeared on television. Now, however, councillors and trade union leaders are bigger than Members of Parliament. They have been built up into personality figures, because television is interested not in issues, but in people.

The current political situation seems to develop into a presidential election campaign at election time. That happened at the last general election when all attention focused on the person at the top. If our proceedings are televised, the same thing will happen here. Every Tuesday and Thursday we shall have "The Maggie and Neil show — Scrap of the Day" — an everyday story of people having a bash at each other. Prime Minister's Question Time would become another soap opera, like the "Buckingham Dallas" with Prince Charles and Princess Diana. It used to be said that religion was the opium of the people. We now have the "soapium" of the people, and the House will become yet another soap opera. Television is bound to head in that direction.

The newspapers have reported that the Prime Minister's change of mind has been brought about because of the advice given to her by Saatchi and Saatchi — that the image of the individual woman standing at the Dispatch Box, with the men howling and shouting at her while she tries to give the impression that she is faced with enormous difficulties in running the country because of all the hooligans on the Opposition Benches, will be worth half a million votes. I believe every word of it. The Prime Minister is a shrewd, sharp politician and a very good operator, so I do not blame her. Politicians are in business to win votes.

However, we have to ask ourselves whether the function of this House is to win votes. Is it a debating Chamber or a political soap box that is designed to win the next election? Television will turn the Chamber into a political soap box. Detailed, leisurely analysis by half a dozen right hon. and hon. Members on the Government and Opposition Benches of a weights and measures Bill, for example, or the White Fish Authority will vanish.

During the time I have been here I have seen one hon. Member eating an apple during Prime Minister's Question Time, knowing that everybody would ask, "Why is he eating an apple?" He was eating an apple to draw attention to the plight of the Kent apple growers. Another hon. Member brought in a box to show the kind of conditions in which battery chickens have to live. Yet another hon. Member wore a white suit to draw attention to certain textile problems.

We held a debate on this matter when my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) was Leader of the House. I sat behind my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) and held up a card saying, "He's daft." It was designed to send up the whole debate and show just how ridiculous it was.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): That was without television.

Mr. Ashton: Yes. And who appeared that evening on "Newsnight"? I did. My right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent was absolutely furious that I had sent up the debate, but I did so to show him what would happen. Who interviewed me on "Newsnight"? It was my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). He had to choose who would appear on television after that serious debate, and he chose the comic aspect of it. That is the way that television producers think.

There has been much talk recently in the press about the emptiness of the Chamber. Of course, the press protests about the Chamber being empty. It is not allowed to go anywhere else. It would love nothing better than to go into the smoke-filled plotting rooms of the Tribune group, the campaign group or the 1922 Committee, but it cannot get in. Therefore, it wants this Chamber to be full of controversy, with hon. Members throwing the Mace about and demonstrating so that there is something to write about. If the Chamber is empty, it is lack-lustre. Nothing appears in the press except the merry quips of the parliamentary commentators who want the Chamber to be full, not empty.

We have to ask ourselves why it is empty. It is empty because during the past 10 or 15 years the work load of hon. Members has increased to an enormous extent. When I became a Member of Parliament 17 years ago there was one bloke in my 250-square mile constituency to whom to complain — me. Now there is an army of community project agencies and citizens advice bureaux, and they bring their problems to me. The work load of all hon. Members has trebled.

Hon. Members serve on Select Committees and campaign at by-elections. I was not here on Monday afternoon for the very important statement on the Anglo-Irish summit, because I was visiting a local factory. But

how many of my constituents, sitting at home watching television, would have known that I was visiting a local factory? They would have said, "We have been sitting here watching television for four or five hours but we have not seen our Member of Parliament. He is probably out skiving, having a day off, or he is in the bar."

It is difficult to explain to our constituents that, if time were allocated among 650 Members of Parliament, we would each get one and a half hours a year. If the proceedings of the House are televised, hon. Members will not get even that. There will be four statements every day from the Dispatch Box. No Minister will ever again answer a written question; it will all be done at the Dispatch Box. The establishment on both Front Benches will organise it. The Back Benchers will be squeezed more and more. We shall end up sounding like the Cecil B. de Mille chorus from "Samson and Delilah". No time will be allocated to Back Benchers if the proceedings of the House are televised.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby, who is a keen advocate of television, is an experienced politician. He has a majority of about 350 over the Social Democratic party.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): No; over the Tories.

Mr. Ashton: Then his Tory opponent, if he has any sense, will sit at home while the House is being televised and watch how often my hon. Friend speaks. He will watch to see how many questions are asked by my hon. Friend and then write to the local newspaper and say, "I sat watching television and did not once see the hon. Member for Great Grimsby". What is even worse for many hon. Members is that their re-election opponents will be sitting at home watching television and spreading the message about how often they have spoken in debates.

Our experience of television in this country—I have to dash off in two minutes because I am to appear on television—is that it has ruined everything that it has touched. It has killed off the cinema; it has killed off football. Football has bitterly regretted ever having allowed the cameras into football grounds. The spectators have vanished. Unless it is Harry Secombe touring Whitby and appearing on "Songs of Praise", religion has also had it on a Sunday evening. Everything has been trivialised in order to attract the mass audience.

Television is most effective when a shrewd interviewer like Robin Day or Alistair Burnet gets right to the heart of the question. With a close-up of the face on the television screen there can be no wriggling. That is the best way for politicians to appear on the box and that is how it should be kept. The televising of Parliament will trivialise it and reduce its importance in the chase for viewers.

5.47 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) made an interesting speech. He showed how prone the Opposition are to lapse into reactionary behaviour. I would prefer Ministers to stand at the Dispatch Box more often and make statements, rather than give press conferences or studio interviews, which means that often the public hear about the Government's intentions before hon. Members hear about them.

The arrival of the cameras will mean that once again this will become a proper debating chamber. It will be answerable to the country. It will be charged with arguing the facts with the Executive, and with the potential Executive on the Opposition Benches. It will no longer be a Chamber of statement and counter-statement, where so much is governed by the application of the Whip. The House should open it windows, as it has already opened its keyhole, to let in the public ear and eye.

We are talking only about an experiment. This was made clear by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes). We shall find out whether what has proved to be acceptable in other countries is acceptable here. However, there is a need for an experiment in camera discipline in televising the proceedings of the Chamber. They must not be trivialised in television's continual search for show business or innuendo.

I have changed my mind since we last debated this matter. It is crucial that there should be a parliamentary television *Hansard* that is answerable to this House for television broadcasts. I believe, with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), that we need the best possible cameras and lighting right from the outset. We have been misled about what is meant by televising the proceedings by what happens at the State Opening of Parliament. The television companies wheel in extremely bright football stadium-type lights, and we are all blinded and sweaty after a few moments. We need the lighting that is required by the most modern cameras, rather than those floodlights, and we must have them during an experiment to see their effect. Linked with that lighting, we must have cameras which can be sufficiently discreet not to intrude into our business, unlike those which have intruded to some degree in the other place, and which would intrude considerably in this House if manned in a similar way. Even if they had to be manned during the experiment, they could be manned indirectly by people sitting in the Gallery and operating remote controls.

The methods of using the television feed should be carefully monitored. It should be done so that reasonably objective assessments can be made of it. Co-operation with the broadcasters will be essential for that purpose, and I was delighted to hear that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has already had informal consultations with them.

In the end, it is a question, not of playing to the media, any more than the media in the Press Gallery are played to at present, nor of playing to the Strangers' Gallery, where visitors come to see our debates, but of playing to the people in the country, who have elected us to the Chamber and to whom we are answerable.

Television is by far the most potent form of communication. We should try it in the House as a method of building better bridges to those who elect us.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I agree with the basic drift of my hon. Friend's argument, but surely he did not mean playing to the people of the country. Surely he wants the cameras to observe what goes on in the House, and does not want to encourage hon. Members to play to the cameras, which is what we fear.

Mr. Rathbone: My hon. Friend is the least appropriate person to read more into my remarks than I meant, as he is so successful at playing to audiences both in the Chamber and outside.

If television coverage could give people just a mite greater appreciation of the fact that Parliament is their

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institution, where their battles are fought and their thoughts can be transmitted, we should be taking a step towards the proper operation of a form of parliamentary democratic government which has been trusted and tried, but which, in the minds of many, has been found to be lacking. Therefore, I hope that an experiment will be undertaken and a Select Committee set up quickly.

5.52 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Despite the modesty of the manner and content of the proposal which was laid before the House at the beginning of the debate, and the helpful and judicious examination by the Leader of the House of the technical and experimental aspects, the House is being invited to take a decision in principle in favour or otherwise of the televising of the proceedings of the House.

The present generation of hon. Members who sit on these green Benches are the holders of a trust, which we have received from those who were here before us, and which it is our duty to hand on as little as possible diminished to those who will sit here after us. One of the tragic ironies about human affairs is that we have it in our power at any time to destroy that which we have not ourselves created, that which, if we destroy, we could not recreate.

The unique characteristics of the people whom we represent, and the unique way in which over the years this House has gone about its business, have forged an instrument, which is also unique to our country and this place, to solve the problem of maintaining a relationship and mutual understanding between the Government and the governed. At the heart of that process, which is the business of the House of Commons, there lies parliamentary debate.

There is nothing like the parliamentary debate of this House anywhere else or in any other Chamber. We do not stride to a rostrum to make orations to our fellow Members; we rise where we sit, from among our fellows; we belong, and are aware of belonging, to a collective corporate entity. The corporate entity of the House is the foundation of the power of the debate which takes place in it to bind together the Government and the people, and to render the Government as far as possible intelligible and accessible to the people.

We address the House with the purpose of being heard by, and winning a hearing from, our fellows and equals. Those who occupy offices of state are, for the purposes of debate, no more than the equals of the rest. We address a gathering which knows us, and by all of whom we are known. It is part of the nature of our debate that everyone, as he seeks his own way of bringing his point of view home to the rest, judges the House, and is judged by the House from moment to moment as he does so. Debate in the House is a seamless garment: the whole collectivity of what happens in the Chamber is a single thing. That is what renders any comparison or presumed analogy between this House and another place utterly misleading.

Such being the character of the House and of our debate, the one certain way to falsify it is to abstract from it one element. Partial representation is essentially falsification. We have already learnt to our cost the damaging consequences of abstracting pure sound from the totality to which that sound belongs; sound which all of us participated in creating, knowing, as we did so, the meaning of it and what we were doing. It would be far more a caricature if we should seek to represent the House in visual strips—views taken now from this angle, now from the other, not of the Chamber as a whole and of what we all know is happening and understand to be happening, but of some visual point on which it is necessary for the camera to concentrate. That would be the denial and, in my view, the destruction of parliamentary debate as it has been forged by literally centuries of the history of the House, by parliamentary debate as parliamentary debate is understood; for our proceedings are understood much better by those outside, by the people whose mutual tolerance and homogeneity are reflected in the House, than is sometimes represented.

During the debate it has been said that we owe it to our constituents and to those outside that they are to be informed. Yes, I agree. Every hon. Member knows that his existence here depends on the maintenance of communication with those who sent him here. That is part of his duty, on which he does not need to be lectured. What we have no right to do with that which we have inherited, to do to those whom we represent, is to present a misrepresentation of this place — a caricature, a falsehood. Of necessity and by its nature, that would be the result of televising the House.

6 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) deployed arguments, which he put in his usual profound way, which were used when people objected to the reporting of our proceedings — [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] I am right. Reports in *The Times* and the *Morning Post* were said to betray the House because they were not full.

The House would prefer people to read everything that is said, but we must live with reality. Many people are far too busy or not sufficiently interested to read everything that is said in the House. They do not regard it as a seamless web. The right hon. Gentleman's argument is not strictly relevant to whether television should be allowed to play its part in reporting, albeit partially, the affairs of the House.

Much of the prejudice among right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House towards televising our proceedings is reflected in the belief that television is basically an entertainment medium. That is what my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) said. That fear is also expressed in today's *Daily Telegraph*, which states:

"above all there is the ineradicable conflict between television as a medium of entertainment, and the Commons as a place of business."

Some in the press suggest that the fourth estate—those who seriously deal with the fundamental issues of this nation—is the preserve of the printed word. I do not think that is true. Television is capable of presenting issues seriously and profoundly with the consistency and sincerity found in any printed journal.

It is strange that in the debates about television in the last few years most hon. Members have agreed that we have the best television service in the world. We have the right to infer that there is a degree of respect for those whose job it is to convey serious views to the public. The

documentary tradition and the presentation of news on television in the United Kingdom is second to none. That view is shared worldwide.

We cannot have it both ways. We cannot praise those who work in television and believe that their service is second to none, yet, when it comes to using the power of television, trivialise their true intentions. I believe that they regard it as their duty to instruct, educate and entertain. We do not do justice to the professional operators who serve television.

There are other underlying fears. One is that if our debates are televised, not only will Parliament be trivialised, but exhibitionist tendencies among our Members will be encouraged. Tension has always existed between hon. Members and the media, but the fears expressed today reveal a fundamental mistrust of the media and a lack of confidence in our ability to adapt.

Some hon. Members incorrectly describe what happens when the proceedings of a democratic assembly are televised. I have seen proceedings televised in the United States. Members of that assembly do not, as my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge suggested, wear make-up or try to hog the cameras. The experiment in Canada also belies that charge. Why should we assume that we will succumb to such terrible temptations?

It is sad that this generation of Members of the Mother of Parliaments should be so lacking in confidence that we can behave ourselves. If we reject the experiment we shall be saying that we have no respect for our ability to behave with appropriate restraint, that we have no respect for the professional abilities of those who work in television and that we have no respect for our own professional expertise in devising a system of supervision to ensure that our own guidelines are adhered to. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made it clear that strong guidelines have been laid down and that there could be sanctions.

I have no objection to the continuous transmission of proceedings. I should not object to it being fed to newspaper offices. The advent of cable would be a useful adjunct.

I accept that some people believe that we should not take too big a leap and that therefore the proposal for an edited daily version of proceedings might commend itself to the House. If it was thought to be too big a leap in the dark for that to be handled by the ITN or the BBC—I declare an interest as a non-executive director of London Weekend Television — the Select Committee might conclude that it should be handled by a parliamentary broadcasting unit. Editorial direction should not be given to individual Members, because that would be wrong. To deny editors of programmes the responsibility of making their own decisions would encourage irresponsibility. However, we might think it appropriate to set up a supervisory board which could ensure on a daily basis that our general guidelines are observed.

It makes sense for special events to be televised. Our debate on entry into the European Community would have benefited from television and resulted in a wider understanding of the issues. Our debates on the Falkland Islands were conducted with dignity, despite strong passions. Televising them would have led to a deeper understanding of the issues at stake. Perennial high points in the parliamentary calendar, such as the Loyal Address, the Budget and debates on defence White Papers, might also benefit from television.

In the days when parliamentary democracy seemed to be at its zenith, in reality Britain was run by a close-knit oligarchy, the members of which were a highly educated elite who communicated easily and naturally. It was a restricted franchise. To that extent, communications between the governed and those who ruled was intimate and prolonged. People knew the rules of the game.

It is sad that today newspapers do not think it right to cover our affairs in detail. It is sad that such is the state of sophistication among our electorate, or the standards of education, that there is not that same close interest that prevailed when the educated minority voted. But those are the problems that obviously come with universal franchise. For that reason alone, therefore, it would be imprudent of us not to rise to the challenge and see how far we could bridge the gap between ourselves and the public — which, whether we like it or not, has increasingly come to accept or to learn from the views and opinions expressed on television.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that television will illustrate, in a way that neither newspaper nor radio can, the under-representation of women in this House? When viewers see the rows upon rows of grey-suited men, will they not do something about it at the next general election?

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Long may we have more hon. Ladies in this House. Although it is not my purpose to promote television for that reason, it is not a bad one.

We must bear in mind that every group in this country, be it a trade union or the CBI, has had to come to terms with the fact that, if it wants to communicate its views, it must use the power of television. I find it odd that a nation that prides itself on being a democracy, and we in this House who pride ourselves on our willingness to communicate with our electorate, should shy at this vehicle to demonstrate that.

The use that the United States made of television did a great deal to restore the faith of American citizens in their democracy. Those of us who visited the United States at the time of the Watergate scandal know the effect that the subsequent inquiries had on the American people. They could see on television that those accused of criminal conspiracies were actually brought to book. The witnesses were examined closely by the inquiry and by committees. Indeed, I strongly argue that television cameras should be present to capture the valuable work done by our Select Committees.

Some fear that television will only encourage hon. Members to disrupt proceedings even more than they do now. On the whole, I find that those who want to disrupt proceedings, whether at public meetings or other events, prefer not to be identified. They probably learnt at school that it is usually best to bait the teacher from the back of the class. Far from encouraging exhibitionism, I believe that such behaviour would look even less attractive when viewed on a screen. The most likely effect would be to cast a question in the mind of the viewer as to whether that hon. Member was fit to be a member of this place.

I think that such outbursts would be self-defeating. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not here to confirm whether I am right, but he

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

never sits at the back of the class. He is most skilled in the art of controlled aggression. I doubt whether he would ever be tempted by the camera to be even more beastly to the Government, because he would not wish to destroy the effectiveness of his interruptions by playing to the cameras.

I conclude that television could strengthen our democratic roots by going to the market place, which, indeed, was the case in the days of the classical Greek civilisation. It was certainly the way that we attempted to do it when we went to the educated elite in the 19th century. In this mass age, we must use television to get to grips with those who, so far, find our affairs unattractive.

Television is an instrument of democracy. I am not sure whether the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) quoted a particular extract from his distinguished predecessor, Mr. Bevan, but I shall quote it now because he spoke during the first Loyal Address debate that I attended when I entered the House in 1959. He said:

"All I am suggesting is that in these days when all the apparatus of mass suggestion are against democratic education, we should seriously consider re-establishing intelligent communication between the House of Commons and the electorate as a whole.—[*Official Report*, 3 November 1959; Vol. 612, c. 866-67.]

I think that he was right. I find that a much greater and nobler challenge than to go outside in the rain and stand under an umbrella while a large number of television people ask us what occurred in this place.

6.15 pm

Mr. Sean Hughes (Knowsley, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) hinted that the best way for a politician to appear on the box was in debate with Robin Day or Alistair Burnet. That begs the question: why is it not even better for a politician to appear on the box in debate with other politicians in the House?

I am a recent convert to the idea of televising the proceedings of Parliament. I agree with much of what I have heard today of the fears and the projected dangers, for example, the heat from lighting and the obstruction of cameras and cables. All that must be controlled, but are we seriously suggesting that such mechanical obstructions should obstruct the televising of Parliament in the late 20th century?

We have heard much about other dangers, such as trivialisation and sensationalism. Are we not fooling ourselves if we pretend that those dangers do not exist here and now, without the presence of the television cameras? It is argued that television will concentrate on the gladiatorial aspect rather than on the intricacies of parliamentary debate. I wonder whom we are trying to delude. The gladiatorial aspect of our proceedings is already the very aspect on which much radio and newspaper comment concentrates.

I listened with great interest to the compelling speech of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). However, I do not share his romantic description of our proceedings. It does not take a new Member of Parliament long to notice that the Press Gallery empties once the opening speeches have been made, only to fill again, miraculously, once the replies begin. If we are honest, we have to accept that it is not only Press Gallery seats that are vacated once the opening speeches have been made.

Change is rarely comfortable, and its consequences are usually exaggerated—as typified by the speech of the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes). Just as the coming of the locomotive was viewed in some circles as a demon on the move, so the coming of television cameras to this Chamber is bound to be viewed with suspicion, and even fear.

There are those who fear that the televising of our proceedings involves some basic principle of parliamentary democracy. There is nothing new in that. It is the argument that was used when Parliament agreed to make provision for the presss and radio. Indeed, until the last century it was a matter of dispute whether the public should have the right to watch our proceedings. Yet today we make greater provision for the press and the public than we do for hon. Members. I am told that of the 929 seats in the Chamber, there are seats for only 427 hon. Members as against 502 for others.

We do not have to look only at the speeches of the past 10 years against the televising of Parliament to see the same arguments being advanced. We could go back a great deal further. I have read a debate that took place on 22 May 1834, when the House was considering whether there should be an alternative report of our debates. There is a striking similarity between what was said then and what we are saying today. That raises the question: what are we afraid of?

All those years ago, hon. Members made points similar to those being made by some hon. Members today. I do not have time, though I wish that I had, to quote from some of those speeches. One that grabbed my imagination was a most unusual argument adduced by a Colonel Evans, who said that he felt the plan was impossible in the first place and, if possible, was objectionable in the second place. Within a year of that debate the press was accommodated, and shortly thereafter, by an act of God, the Houses of Parliament burnt down.

I have never ignored the part that tradition plays in our lives. I believe that tradition can enable us to make progress painlessly. I have never accepted the doctrine of inevitability. However, I believe that the day must come when television will be given access to the House, just as the press and radio have been given access to it.

Some hon. Members have expressed fear that televising our proceedings would lead to change, even to a reform of our proceedings. That might be so. But that change would occur not simply as a result of placing a few cameras and several yards of cable in the Chamber. It would come as a result of the reaction of the viewers, the people who have sent us here.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): My hon. Friend argued earlier that the press did not sufficiently report our proceedings. Why does he think that an edited version —it would be greatly edited; the programme would last for perhaps 15, at the most 30, minutes—would portray much of the proceedings of the House? Would there not be the possibility that when, as with "Yesterday in Parliament", it was discovered that there was only a small audience, the edited version would become even shorter?

Mr. Hughes: I support my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) who said that it would be one more Forum. Limited though it might be, one more would be better than none at all. After all, the viewers—the electors, the public—should be at the

centre of this argument. Despite all the sophisticated arguments and the weighty views of constitutional experts, we are discussing the right of the British people to see and hear the proceedings of their Parliament through the medium of their choice.

I recognise that there would have to be safeguards, and I appreciate the dangers of editing. We are debating a principle. Many of my constituents never read the so-called quality press and the already brief reports of Commons debates. They do not turn to Radio 4 automatically. The medium through which they get the news is unquestionably television, and we shall be doing them a grave disservice and denying them access to our debates if we do not admit the cameras.

I admit that I have a vested interest in wanting my constituents to witness the Government arguing why there is no alternative to their policies. The issue is simply about the right of people in a late-20th century democracy to see their Parliament in session.

In the debate in 1834 Sir Samuel Whalley said:

"If Members wished to discharge their duty conscientiously, they would desire those whom they represented to be fully apprised of their proceedings."

That sentiment has stood the test of time.

6.25 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Although I am well known to be a sympathetic character, I find it difficult to make my heart bleed for the constituents of the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes) at the news that they are unable to read the serious newspapers. I am sure that they are able, should they wish, to purchase any newspapers they desire and that, should they not be able to do that, to read the accounts of our proceedings in newspapers in their local libraries. There is no barrier to people reading newspapers. Anybody who wants to learn about the proceedings of this House can do so.

I am in favour of having a Strangers Gallery so that people may come to watch us at work at any hour when we are sitting. However, I am against the televising of our proceedings because that is a totally different matter.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me a few moments to get into my speech, I will then gladly give way to him.

What exactly is the purpose of Parliament? That is the most crucial question for us to ask. This House is, or should be, a place of dignity and serious debate, a place where laws are made and from which the country is governed. It cannot be turned into a form of national entertainment without losing its essential character. My first objection, therefore, which has been referred to by many hon. Members, is the fear of trivialising Parliament.

I join the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) in what he said about our responsibility to history. That responsibility is not to ensure that our faces are on the nation's screens. Like him, I believe that we have a duty, having been elected, to carry on the dignity and character of the House of Commons so that others who come after us may continue it, and we cannot regard lightly our responsibility in that respect.

As we have learnt from televising the proceedings in the Lords, the media's techniques are not conducive to serious assimilation of debate. The cameras there linger for perhaps a minute—I am being kind; normally they linger for far less than 60 seconds—on one speaker. The producers believe that a face cannot be shown for a greater time. After lingering for a few seconds, off the cameras go like frenetic butterflies, alighting on such flowers of entertainment value as a sleeping Member, one showing a little too much yellow sock, or perhaps two chatting together ignoring the speaker.

My second objection is that accuracy would undoubtedly be a casualty. Unless all debates were televised to the bitter end, there would have to be selective reporting, and experience shows that highlights chosen by producers do not present a balanced view. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) brushed that argument aside as though it were a bothersome fly of no account. He said in effect, "If there is an imbalance, we can complain and matters will be put right."

I cannot believe that would happen. Indeed, if we tried to complain, we should be lobbied and there would be banners proclaiming that we were interfering with the freedom of the media to say what they wish in their television programmes. One can imagine the letters that would arrive. If anyone tries to interfere with the media and their ability to choose what they select, there is trouble.

We have experience of what would happen not simply from the televising of the Lords, but from programmes such as "Yesterday in Parliament" and "Today in Parliament". They are examples of the way in which producers allow their natural desire to produce an entertaining programme to take precedence over straight reporting. Those programmes used to be much more accurate than they are now.

I believe that control of the Chamber will slip away from your hands, Mr. Speaker, which means from the hands of us all. Some hon. Members will use the House as a stage on which to project themselves. It was an interesting Freudian slip that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) made when he said that our job is to play to our constituents. We were elected not to play to anyone, but to do our job. I resent the idea that entertaining is a new role that we should be expected to carry out.

Television in the Chamber cannot give an accurate portrayal of the work of Parliament. So much of our work takes place outside the Chamber in Select Committees, in Standing Committees, in undertaking research in the Library and in our offices. I was interested when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) overcame that objection by saying merrily, "Let us have television cameras everywhere. Let us have them in Select Committees and in Standing Committees. Let us have them here, there and everywhere."

How much will all this cost? No one has asked about the cost of televising Parliament. There are various estimates——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: One is £2·5 million per annum.

Dame Jill Knight: My hon. Friend says that one estimate is £2·5 million per annum and I know of that one. Will the cost of the licence be increased to obtain that money, or will the Government grant it as a special allowance? If the former, there will be an outcry from those who strongly object when the cost of the television

[Dame Jill Knight]

licence is increased. If the latter, I must tell my right hon. and hon. Friends who occupy the Front Bench that there are many better things on which we can spend £2·5 million per annum than televising the proceedings of the House.

I have no wish to bore the British nation to death, and it must be said that most of the screening in their Lordships' House is a crashing bore. Viewing figures bear that out. How many people rush back from the pub, or wherever, and tear indoors to see what is being shown of the proceedings in another place? There are few, if any, who do that. If all our proceedings are shown, the result will be the dullest programme on television. If selections are shown, we shall face the problem of editing for entertainment. It is not the function of the House to provide that.

Where is the evidence that there is any public demand for the televising of Parliament? Has any hon. Member received shoals of letters from constituents begging him to argue for the televising of our proceedings? I am sure that no one has. I have not had one such letter.

Have we seen queues around Parliament square showing the anxiousness of the public to tear into the Chamber to listen to this crucial debate on whether they will be allowed to view our proceedings on television? We do not refer to these things normally, Mr. Speaker, but I must observe, as it is so relevant to the debate, that throughout the course of our deliberations this afternoon the Strangers Gallery has never been more than half full. How is it to be supposed that anyone is keen on spending £2·5 million each year on projecting our proceedings?

Mr. Winnick *rose*——

Dame Jill Knight: No, I shall not give way. I wish to finish my speech shortly.

How would members of the public take to having the beady eyes of 10 million people on them throughout the time that they spend in their offices? How would they feel if they were forcibly subjected to the gaze of 10 million people for hour after hour as they worked? Imagine the reaction of teachers, factory workers, office workers, doctors, gardeners and shop assistants, for example, if television cameras were to be allowed to portray their every move during their time of work.

This is a stupid idea. Why should we put up with it? What an outcry there would be if we expected those outside the House to tolerate what we are now considering should happen to ourselves.

6.35 pm

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame Jill Knight) was talking nonsense when she said that the televising of proceedings in another place was a crashing bore. One of the reasons why many of us want the proceedings in this place to be televised is the success of the televising of another place, which has aroused a certain jealousy in the House.

I declare a personal interest, because my daughter produces the programme which shows the proceedings in another place. That is a special reason for me to support the motion. Having made that declaration, I believe that most Members watch the proceedings in another place on television and wish that the proceedings in this place were televised. That is one of the reasons why the motion has been advanced.

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), in a typically intellectual and elegant speech, gave me the impression that he was talking to a bunch of masons, as if we were a private elite and had nothing to do with those outside. He could not be more wrong. This is a public assembly and we address ourselves to the public outside the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) came out with one of his typical and characteristic horror stories. He suggested that every bad thing that takes place in the House should be televised. He seemed to be saying that speeches should not be televised, but that everything that his fevered imagination could dredge up should be. He was talking as much nonsense as the hon. Member for Edgbaston.

We know that television producers—I was one for eight years—are extremely responsible people. They lean over backwards to ensure justice for Members of this place and for those in another place. I believe that they bend over too far. They are too responsible and respectful. They should let things go a bit. The charge that they would take the mickey out of us is absurd. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw probably appears on television more frequently than any other Member. He appears every night—sometimes five times a night. He knows full well that television producers will not disregard the conventions of the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw mentioned the Prime Minister's conversion. If it is true that the Prime Minister is now in favour of televising our proceedings because she thinks that it will lead to a political advantage for her, she has bought a boomerang. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and shadow Ministers are twice as good as the Prime Minister and her Ministers. The longer this Parliament continues, the more obvious that will become. I hope that my hon. Friend will take that point on board.

One of the main objections is that the exhibitionists and buffoons—some of those who have spoken, but not those who are in favour of the motion—will take over the show. I am sure that Mr. Speaker will not stand for that. He will continue to call hon. Members to contribute to debates as he does now. Like other assemblies, we have our buffoons and exhibitionists. They have not taken over in the United States, Australia, Canada or western European assemblies, and there is no reason for arguing that they will take over here.

It is said that television will trivialise our proceedings. I cannot believe that this legislature will be turned into a comic show merely because we have television cameras in the Chamber. To argue that way is to disregard the function of the House and to insult hon. Members and the public.

We must come to terms with the modern world. We must move with the times. We must stop fighting the battle that our ancestors fought by keeping the press out. Television is the modern press——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Ashley: Yes, it is. Television is the modern means of communication. Without it, we shall continue to cut ourselves adrift from public opinion. We shall become an

offshore legislature. We shall legislate for a tribe about whom we know nothing—the British people. We need television because it is the most important medium of communication; we need television to restore our link with the electorate who sent us here; we need television to put us back in the centre of the stage to ensure that we again become the prime forum for public debate; and we need television to restore the lifeblood of public interest.

Ultimately, we are speaking not simply of the convenience of the House. Parliament is not about parliamentarians. The British people have the right to know and see what goes on. We have a duty to them to expose our proceedings and allow them to be televised. The sooner we do that, the better for all concerned.

6.41 pm

Mr. Geoff Lawler (Bradford, North): We have been bombarded with excuses and exaggerations as to why the House should not be televised. We should strip away all the excuses and exaggerations and come to the overriding principle that this is a democratic institution. It is in the nature of any democratic institution to provide access to the population. If access can be provided to the mass of the population through technology, what right have we, in a democratic society, to deny that access?

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) referred to the popularity of the Strangers Gallery. Despite the inconvenience caused to the police and administrators who run the Palace, the security problems and the costs, we encourage people to fill the Strangers Gallery. Unfortunately, that Gallery has a limited capacity. Many other constraints also prevent people from coming to the Palace — for example, the cost of travel and the inability to take time off from work. If the people cannot come to us, we must go to them. The press and radio have provided us with the means of doing so and the logical extension is television.

Dame Jill Knight: I must raise a rather important point. Does my hon. Friend have evidence that there is a demand?

Mr. Lawler: There is a demand. Many of my constituents would love to look around the Palace and watch our proceedings but are not able to do so because they cannot get away from work or because they cannot afford to come here. The demand is evident from the queues outside the Palace. If the demand cannot be satisfied, television can provide a means of satisfying it, enabling people to stay in their homes to watch what is happening here.

Hon. Members would like more people to watch the proceedings. They are proud when their friends or constituents are in the Strangers Gallery. They are rightly proud of the House. Why are they reticent about letting more people see the House? Why are they suddenly not so proud of the proceedings and want to hide them away from the public?

The public should see us as we are, as they do when they come to the Strangers Gallery. They will be able to do so through television. If the public do not like what they see, we must look to ourselves to change. We must not be arrogant and say, "The public do not understand the nature of our debate, our behaviour and the emotions that are aroused. Therefore, they should not be exposed to us and we should not expose our behaviour to them." If there is a strong reaction to the way in which we conduct ourselves, we should question our behaviour, not the public's view.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I am fascinated to hear my hon. Friend say that we should change. I presume he means that, because only about 3 per cent. of any serious debate will be shown on television, we should all start to speak in slogans. If television has to cover every hon. Member's contribution, we shall all have to say about four words, or there will be selectivity. What change is my hon. Friend prepared to make in his excellent speech to get his seven-word slot on television?

Mr. Lawler: My hon. Friend has made two points. One is about change. I am not advocating any change——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: My hon. Friend was advocating change.

Mr. Lawler: No. If the public react to the televising of our proceedings and to seeing more of what happens by saying that our behaviour is unruly and that we do not have informed debates, we shall have to react. That change will evolve, as our behaviour has evolved over many years.

When I look tomorrow at *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph* or *The Guardian*, I shall have had no say in whether any of my speech is covered or, if any, how much. At the most, the reporters will have picked out two or three paragraphs. The logical extension of the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) is that we should deny the press the right to report what goes on in the House because it has to make that selection.

For a body of people who are naturally publicity conscious and only too keen to receive publicity, a number of hon. Members seem to be uncharacteristically shy. Politicians cannot have publicity only on their terms. We cannot be selective about the publicity that we receive when we conduct our public duties. Part of our role is to go around factories and to tour old people's' homes in our constituencies. We like the public to see in the newspapers photographs of ourselves in those places, and no doubt we are on our best behaviour there. If, the next day, we behave in a less than decorous manner in the relative privacy of the House, we should not expect to be unobserved. We should be judged by our performance here just as we are judged by our behaviour in our constituencies.

One argument is that any change in the House is anathema and that the atmosphere is unique and sacred. I do not believe that television will change the atmosphere or our behaviour. If there is a reaction because of televising our proceedings, let it happen. This place is not our House. We have no sacrosanct hold over it. We have no right to say that the present atmosphere is now and for ever shall be. This is not our place. We are its temporary residents. It belongs to the people, and we should not cosset it and seek to possess it. If change is forced upon us, we should accept it and not perpetuate this ivory tower.

Mr. Spearing Does the hon. Gentleman agree, first, that anyone who looks after his constituents cannot be in an ivory tower and, secondly, that we have an obligation to the public to conduct public affairs in the Chamber in a reasonably efficient and proper way, as suits us as public representatives? I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees with both statements.

Mr. Lawler: Of course we have the right to conduct ourselves efficiently and properly. Exposing our behaviour on television to the public will help us discover what is acceptable to them. As, for example, with the Canadian experience, we might improve our behaviour and make ourselves more acceptable to the public.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point about the ivory tower, unfortunately this Chamber is regarded as an ivory tower by the public. It is irrelevant to the national political scene, in the public's view. With the growth of pressure groups and Committee work in the House, what goes on in the Chamber is almost unknown and mainly irrelevant. That is a shame and something that should be corrected.

We can increase the Chamber's relevance by making people more aware of what goes on here. What is said here is not everyday conversation down at the local public house and shop. We do not find heated debate about how so-and-so performed in such-and-such a debate, or what an hon. Member said. That is a shame. By putting the Chamber on television, we might find that happening. We might find people discussing what happened in the Chamber and how a particular hon. Member made a splendid contribution or point. Suddenly the Chamber might become relevant to the national political scene. I am sure that that change would be greatly welcomed.

If we reject this opportunity to give the Chamber new status and significance, we are in danger of going the other way. We shall lose credibility and be seen to be anachronistic. We shall continue to be irrelevant. Like it or not, television is a way of life for the vast majority of our population.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, hon. Members do not have much time to watch television. When I return to my constituency, I am struck by how out of touch I appear when I cannot join in much of the conversation, which invariably centres on what has been on television during the previous week and what has happened in the latest soap opera. The public do not spend hours pouring over parliamentary reports in the newspaper, reading *Hansard* or listening to Radio 4.

The House decided a long time ago to allow its deliberations to be made public. Once, the most appropriate medium for that was the newspapers. Today, it is television. We should seek to use the medium which the majority of the population use.

This country has passed on its democratic heritage to many countries. Many of the offspring of the Mother of Parliaments have taken the advance that we are debating, with positive results. It will be a shame if we resist such an advance and refuse to learn and benefit from their experience.

The privacy of our proceedings was originally promoted to advance democracy. To reject the opportunity today to open up our proceedings to the widest possible audience will be undemocratic and will weaken the relevance and stature of the House. People elect us to govern them, and they have the right to watch how we do it.

6.53 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): The hon. Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) lives in cloud-cuckoo-land if he believes that the public will receive his speech or mine at great length and watch them unadulterated and unedited. My impression is that there is not much demand for the televising of Parliament. People will probably want to see snippets on the "9 o'clock News" or "News at Ten", and that will be the end of it. I am not against the televising of Parliament, but we must be realistic about the coverage that will be achieved.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we should not treat the Chamber as if it were a sacred institution, with the idea that it would be sacrilege to alter it. I am only too well aware of the inadequacy of our procedures. Hon. Members must be frustrated by the lack of financial power we have in the House compared with many Parliaments in western Europe and beyond.

We are in danger of taking the debate out of context. I was prepared to vote against the motion because it seemed to me wrong that we should vote for a principle without knowing the practicalities. According to the motion, which the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) moved so well, we were apparently prepared to agree to an experiment in principle and then to have running sidesaddle with it, so to speak, a Select Committee charged with the job of implementing it but not with the consideration of whether it would be desirable.

However, the Leader of the House has swayed some of my views, because, if we follow his advice and vote for the motion, we shall not be voting for what it describes. In other words, we shall have an opportunity to consider the principle and the detail when the Select Committee reports. It will then be possible to put the boot in to the proposal if it does not match up to what we expected.

The House, through the Select Committee and the debate that we shall have in six months, can dictate to the broadcasters what it wants to put over. We could make many mistakes. We do not have to look far from sound broadcasting, which I think was one of the biggest gaffes the House has made for a long time. That is saying something considering some of the peculiar decisions that we have made.

Broadcasters naturally look at the most entertaining and lively parts of our proceedings. That must of course mean Question Time. Question Time is entertainment. We should all stagger back in disbelief if we ever managed to obtain some information out of Question Time. It is there. It is prime time. The public desperately want tickets to get in and it is carried to its zenith—if I may use that description, probably incorrectly—at Prime Minister's Question Time. We face each other in an adversarial, indeed gladiatorial, fashion and make a great deal of noise. If we want to get rid of the noise, we must alter the shape of the Chamber and call people to a rostrum to make speeches. We should soon all be preserved in aspic and the quality of many of our debates would decline.

One of the dangers of introducing television to the House without considering our procedures is that their shape may change in a way that we have not determined. Right from the start, we must take on board the fact that we are moving towards television because television is the principal medium of communication. It is the medium for election fighting. It is anachronistic to go around knocking on doors and speaking to our constituents. With one television appearance, we can reach more constituents during an election than we can with all our knocking on doors. Leaflets through the door are not a useful way of imparting ideas. Television is the medium.

I suspect that one of the reasons why we are discussing this issue tonight is that we are in the gravitational pull of a general election. Some people have been looking at their sums and are beginning to say, "We should have coverage

on television during the run-up to an election because we may put over our case more effectively." If we introduce this experiment, we should not do it in the run-up to a general election. It would be far more effective to introduce it immediately after the election of a new Parliament.

I have some doubt about what the practical effects of television coverage might be. I take up some of the points made by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on the subject of Question Time. If Question Time gets the television slots, members of a minority party will want to be called, because Question Time receives the coverage. All hon. Members will have to change their priorities. It will not just be a matter for minority parties. There will be competition for a restricted time slot.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Would it not be better, instead of coverage being slotted into programmes, to have a 24-hour channel so that people could switch on and off when they wished? That would prevent all the problems. It could cover the work of Select Committees and the Standing Committees which do most of the work.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman has raised an interesting point. He must remember that the electorate might not want to watch a 24-hour channel. Heaven forbid that we move to a 24-hour day.

My point is still valid; if we are talking of television we are talking of prime time. Prime Minister's Question Time takes place at the right time of day for coverage in the news programmes. In general debates, if a Member is not called before 5 o'clock, his chances of being quoted in the television news have probably gone. The point has already been made about statements. We will have to re-adjust our individual, party and parliamentary priorities to meet the demand made by the new medium. Many of us may be disappointed and disillusioned by the experiment, and electors may reach a similar view.

Practical problems must be considered. I want to make it clear on behalf of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party that we would not be happy to be represented on the Select Committee by a member of the SDP or the Liberal party. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where are they?"] They have vanished to do their plethora of television interviews. At one time we could have trusted members of those parties, because they wanted to further the interests of smaller parties. They now have ambitions beyond their stature. They are imperialist in the sense that they want to aggrandise themselves to get media coverage. That is legitimate, but I should not like to trust our parties to their care on the Select Committee.

The Leader of the House will not be able to answer other specific points, but I wish to put them on the record on behalf of Plaid Cymru and the SNP. What facilities will be made available to broadcasters in Scotland and Wales? Will adequate editing facilities be available? The experiment should not be done purely on a metropolitan basis. Many hon. Members will want their local television stations to have access to coverage of their own speeches as frequently as possible.

Important debates on housing and local government in Scotland and Wales often take place after 10.30 pm. Will the television cameras cover those proceedings in the wee small hours of the night? Those debates will affect our constituents more perhaps than grand debates on foreign affairs. If the cameramen will be there at that time, who will pay them? Will it be the House, the BBC, ITN or the local companies? The local companies would not want to take on that expense.

There are the proceedings of Select Committees, and of Standing Committees too, although heaven forbid that anyone should want to watch what we get up to there. What about the Scottish and the Welsh Grand Committees? The Scottish Grand Committee deals with some Bills that might otherwise be taken on the Floor of the House. Is the Scottish Grand Committee to be covered? If not, we should insist that all Scottish Bills are dealt with in the House because of the possibility of television coverage.

If the Scottish Grand Committee is covered, will its proceedings be televised when it meets in the Scottish Assembly building in Edinburgh? As the Leader of the House is no doubt aware, it meets in Edinburgh four or five times a year to deal with legislation and other important matters Who will take the cameras there for occasional visits? Yet it would be wrong if important visits by Scottish Members to the Scottish Grand Committee in their own country were not covered. The gallery is not large enough to accommodate many members of the public, although I must put it on record that my experience of meetings in Edinburgh is that the general public are not keen to inflict on themselves the same masochistic damage that we inflict on ourselves.

I support in principle the televising of the House, but I have reservations about how it may be put into effect. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I will support the motion because of the assurance given by the Leader of the House that the principle of coverage will be married to a detailed report from the Select Committee and that we will have another bite at the apple.

7.5 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): My instinctive belief is that we should be cautious about letting the cameras into this debating Chamber. My view was powerfully reinforced on the evening before the House of Lords television experiment began when I watched a trailer for the next day's debate. There were three scenes on the trailer.

There was a picture of an American Congressman going mad. We moved from Washington to the Floor of the Bundestag in Bonn. We did not see a great speech by the German Chancellor. Instead, we saw a riot by the Green party. We moved from the Bundestag to the European Parliament. There was a picture of our own dear Les Huckfield, whose microphone had been cut off because he had breached a rule of European parliamentary etiquette —he had pulled out a loud hailer and was addressing Members of the European Parliament, who looked somewhat bemused. Clearly the television producer believed that those three scenes were good television, but they showed Parliaments at their worst.

I fear that violence and bad behaviour will spread to this House if its proceedings are televised. My fears were not much assuaged when I watched the first serious debate from the House of Lords on the Second Reading of the Local Government Bill, whose purpose was to abolish the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties. I had reservations about that legislation, but my noble Friend Lord Elton made an admirable speech. When it came to televising the speech, the producers could not

[Sir Philip Goodhart]

allow a shot of longer than 30 seconds from one angle of a speaker at the Dispatch Box, so we had 30 seconds of Lord Elton's left profile, 30 seconds of Lord Elton straight on, and 30 seconds of Lord Elton's right profile. The television producers were clearly getting alarmed about how they would fill the next 30 minutes of his speech.

Relief came in the shape of Lady Seear. The deputy leader of the Liberal party, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), claimed that the Liberals had only 40 seconds' coverage in an important debate in the House of Lords. The Liberal party managed to get 40 seconds in the debate on the GLC because one of the straps of Lady Seear's undergarments slipped over her left shoulder, and she spent the next 40 seconds or so trying to get it back by shrugging her shoulders. The television cameras zoomed in on her because that provided relief from going from one dull-looking Member to another.

That underlines the fact that not only did the producers wish to trivialise the important debate that was taking place, but unfortunately that televising speeches from the Lords or the Commons will be very dull indeed, visually speaking. The producers and the audience will seek relief after a few seconds.

If we must experiment—I am very doubtful whether we should, and I shall not vote for the motion—we would be well advised to follow the example of the United States Senate over the years. Although the cameras, under strict control, have gone into the House of Representatives in Washington, the Senate has always resisted having the cameras on its Floor. However, the Senate allows the cameras into the Senate Committees when the Chairman and Members of those Committees agree. Some of the televised hearings in the Committees have been historic. I was in Washington at the time of the hearings presided over by Senator Ervin, during the Watergate scandal. Undoubtedly those hearings helped to change the course of history.

If we were to have cameras, we would be well advised to begin with the Select Committees rather than on the Floor of the House, because the cross-examination of witnesses, the courtroom scene in the Select Committee, is naturally good television. One does not have to fiddle around looking for odd gimmicks to make it real, attractive and interesting to the audience.

If we pass the motion, I hope that the Select Committee will look with equal seriousness at the televising of Select Committees as at the televising of the House.

7.14 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The basic reason why the House should be televised is to bridge the gulf between us and the people. After all, we are the people's Parliament. We are not a closed debating society. We are the representatives of the people. We are not speaking for ourselves. We are discussing the issues that matter to the people and making decisions that affect their lives. Therefore, we should be available to the people on the medium from which they now get the bulk of their information about news and current affairs. Lament it how some will, that is the fact. If we are not on that medium, we relegate ourselves to a backwater that is irrelevant to the people and their lives.

Arcane abstractions have been dredged up from the 18th century via South Down, but we are not a 19th-century debating Chamber. We are not influencing and persuading each other. We cannot control the Executive, because we cannot bring it down. We have a system of government by party in which the people choose the Executive, and the people alone can bring it down. In that situation, the House of Commons is the open part of the system, where decisions become public for debate. It is the forum of the nation where the issues are discussed. It is the stage for the battle of ideas where the case for and against what the Government are doing is put before the people. All that is done to inform and educate the people. Yet what a farce it is if we do not reach the people.

The popular papers do not report us. The qualities give bald summaries for a small readership. The radio, which is a minority channel, carries noisy extracts of our debates, but television, the only genuine mass medium, carries only sound radio with still pictures. We are the weaker for that. We can be effective and reflect the public's concerns only if we have firm roots outside. We should be involved in a two-way communication process with the people outside, because it is the people who are the root of our power.

All the arguments against televising Parliament have one common characteristic — they are all defensive. There is a strange coalition of opponents. We have hon. Members who feel that their inadequacies in performance, or the lack of it, should not be exposed to the gaze of the public. We have hon. Members who feel that the House is so awful——

Mr. Faulds: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mitchell: No.

Mr. Faulds: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mitchell: No, I am sorry, I am not giving way.

Mr. Faulds: He is frightened of the argument.

Mr. Mitchell: Some hon. Members feel that the House is so awful that the public should not be allowed to see it. Some feel that the public are so stupid and ill-informed that they will not understand what we are doing. Over the past few days journalists, men of the written word, have been bitterly hostile to television coverage, which will cut down their importance, their job as self-appointed middle men mediating between us and the people at inordinate profit to themselves. Both the Charles Moore article in the *Daily Telegraph* and the Hugo Young article in yesterday's edition of *The Guardian* showed contempt for politicians and television.

In the Chamber, two fears are paramount. There is fear of change in the Chamber and fear of television itself. To those who fear change in the Chamber, I say that, with television, the lighting will be somewhat brighter than it is now, but the House can be unconscionably dim at times, can it not? If we bring in the cameras straight away, they will be operator cameras. If we wait until the start of the next Session in November, the broadcasting organisations will be able to supply wall-mounted remote-control cameras that are unobtrusive.

It is up to us in the House to define the terms of the coverage. We could go for the Canadian style of coverage or that in the United States House of Representatives, where the Speaker is shown in mid-shot and there are no cutaways, no shots of disturbances, no shots of people rushing like lemmings to jump from the Gallery almost as fast as nationalised industries have been flogged off—no

sensationalism, just straight, neutral coverage. We could go for the same coverage as the House of Lords, which allows cutaways. The decision is for the Select Committee and the House, and it has to be taken predominantly in the light of what the House wants rather than what the television people want. That is the important thing. The decision is ours. When we are televised, what will come over is what is effective now—serious, straightforward Chamber debate.

Mr. Faulds: How gullible.

Mr. Mitchell: The speech of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), unlike the interventions of my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds)——

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: That speech would come over——

Mr. Faulds: If my hon. Friend has the guts to give way——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order.

Mr. Mitchell: I shall not give way.

The speech by the right hon. Member for South Down would come over extremely well on television, wrong as it was, because it was compelling argument. That is the truth of the matter. It is not the histrionics of the demagogue or the subtle lying of the studio, but straightforward Chamber debating that comes over effectively. It is striking from the Hansard Society report on the House of Lords coverage how little the House of Lords has changed because of the advent of television.

There are those who fear change. We have conducted ourselves like a closed debating society for many years. What good has that done us? What respect is there for the House of Commons? The public are increasingly alienated from parties, politicians and politics. They do not respect or hold hon. Members and the House of Commons in esteem. The public are not in awe—they are bored and alienated and believe that we are remote. We must reach out to the public, and we can do so through the media from which they get their news and information.

In this closed debating society, for much of the day the Chamber is dying on its feet, which may be especially true when I am speaking. The Chamber is badly attended and uninspiring for large chunks of the day. The only way to remedy that is to make it once again the focus of attention by putting it on television and making it available to the people. Through television we have the chance to make the Chamber important and a focus of interest and concern once again. We should seize that chance.

I never understand the fear of television—a fear that has been so manipulated tonight.

Mr. Wilson *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: Television is essentially a mirror of reality. It has faults, but reality has faults. If we object to reality——

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you enlighten me? Under which code of practice are we debating? Is it the pre-television one, when one gives way to interventions, or is this the post-television age when we do not?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Mitchell: The interventions have been so repetitious and so absurd——

Mr. Faulds: My hon. Friend has not listened to them. I am so grateful that he has at last been overcome by embarrassment and is prepared to listen to a moment of contradiction of some of his arguments. I rose first—I made many attempts later—to make the point that my hon. Friend seemed to be basing his attack on some of us on the fact that we were defensive about television. I happen to like the medium. I am rather good on television. If, unfortunately, the cameras come in, I will probably benefit from it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that this is an intervention, not a speech.

Mr. Faulds: What I wanted to say to my hon. Friend when he refused to let me intervene is that we are not defensive about proper television coverage of this House. If there were a continuous programme, I would vote for it. What we are defensive about is the selective presentation that the media boys will give to televising the Chamber.

Mr. Mitchell: I thank my hon. Friend for making it clear why I did not give way in the first place. I did not want his speech to punctuate mine.

The critics of television are getting it both ways. They say that the House is too dull to be covered, and that it will be reduced to a form of entertainment. They say that people will not be interested, but also that 10 million people will be watching for every flaw, every absentee Member and every aberration. If they are influenced by those fears, they can only suck it and see. The experiment gives us a chance to see whether the fears are realised. That is what an experiment is about.

Mr. Faulds: Jump off the cliff and see where you land.

Mr. Mitchell: It is no use listening to abstract fears of people who have not seen the proceedings on television and who are defensive about it. The best way is to watch the experiment and see how it works.

The critics of television must not forget that we already appear on television and in the least appetising, most inadequate way — a voice-over radio broadcast with irrelevant pictures. Why should not the reality be shown through the television cameras? We should be clear that the coverage will be different for each level and channel. Television will have several forms of coverage of our proceedings. Eventually, we shall have full-time coverage on cable. Cable is coming. In Canada, there is full-time coverage by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the United States has such coverage on C-Span. They attract small but devoted, interested and involved audiences. There will occasionally be full debates on important issues, as there have been on the radio. There will be daily and weekly edited summaries of what has happened in Parliament on BBC 2 and on Channel 4. There will be extracts of speeches and statements in Parliament in the news and in the current affairs programmes. There will also be regional coverage by the regional companies of regional matters and Members of Parliament.

Each channel will make its own decisions and choices. There is enough evidence that, within that range of choice, everyone will see something. However, those who wish to see more and to pay continual attention to the House will

[Mr. Mitchell]

be able to follow their interests, and why not? It could be a long debate, or simply a reminder on the news that Parliament exists. In contrast to the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton), some of my constituents have telephoned me in Grimsby during the week and, when told that I am in London, respond by saying, "What is he doing in London?" There is an amazing ignorance of Parliament.

The fear of television is unrealistic. The debate has moved on more recently to an argument about which party will have the advantage, and whether Front-Bench or Back-Bench Members will benefit. The Prime Minister is reported to have changed her mind yet again. I hope that she is not, as *The Guardian* put it, "uncharacteristically dithering". She has everything to gain by appearing on television, as does the leader of the Labour party. Both will come over brilliantly, because ability comes over well on television. That is what people will be looking for. If ability comes over well, it is not a matter of which party wins or loses. The whole Chamber will gain, because we shall have shown that we are doing a serious job. We shall allow the public to judge our ability, performance and how we get on in this testing ground. We shall not leave that judgment to the insiders — to the sketch writers who relay their views in their theatre criticisms, peddling small doses of what happens here, at inordinate profit to themselves.

The experiment in the House of Lords has shown how successful television can be. It was not naturally the most exciting television, it was not naturally the most propitious experiment that could have been conducted, but at the end of the experiment, 81 per cent. of a representative sample of 200 peers wished the experiment to continue. In a sample of the public interviewed by BBC audience research, 72 per cent. believed that television gave them a good insight into what was happening in the House of Lords. Moreover, audiences were good. There was an average reach of 1·5 million for the afternoon and of 300,000 for the late night programmes.

Indeed, when the ITN programme "Their Lordships' House" went out late at night, the audiences were one fifth higher than they had been for the programmes in the preceding four weeks. That is the test. The consumers liked it, and those who participated liked it and wished it to continue. That 19th century institution down the corridor has shown us the way into the 20th century. It is a success story that should give us the confidence to take the plunge. If we do not, that House will continue to get the prestige of being on television.

The House of Commons should go ahead on a similar basis. We could do so by voting today in principle and then allowing the Select Committee to agree the coverage that will be most acceptable to hon. Members. Then we should put it to the test of an experiment, preferably as long as possible and as late as possible, so that we can install remote-controlled, wall-mounted cameras, which are less obtrusive, and decide the matter on the basis of reality, not the hypothetical fears that have been projected today by those who are scared of television.

Only when we have seen how it works will we have to take a final decision, and power will remain in our hands throughout that process. I hope we will decide not on fears, either of ourselves or of television, or on the kind of quibbles that have been paraded before us, but on what is in the best interests of the people who have a growing desire to know, to see, and to be involved. All the evidence is that people want the House to be televised.

Secondly, we must decide on the basis of what is in the best interests of this House. We are the last major Chamber to allow television in, and it is television alone that will enable us to do our real job, which is to put arguments before the people. We have dithered, delayed, hesitated and hovered. Enough is enough, and it is well past the time to reach out and talk directly to the people. We can do it through this experiment, and if we go ahead we shall be moving into the 20th century instead of cowering in fear of the world outside, pretending we are still living in the 19th century, doing a job that is dead in a Chamber that is half alive.

7.31 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). My interest in televising Parliament and, in particular, the House of Commons stems from the ten-minute Bill which I introduced in 1978. It was lost by about 10 or 15 votes. In 1978 and at subsequent times when the matter was placed before the House by other hon. Members under the ten minutes rule, there was a growing strength of opinion in favour of televising proceedings of the House.

The evidence that I laboriously collected from all over the world before introducing my ten-minute Bill has been strengthened, not nullified. The facts and figures I presented about democratic countries that had television in their Parliaments and had never thrown it out have been further strengthened in the seven years since 1978. I am not aware of any country which televises its parliamentary proceedings that has got rid of it. It has worked, and in some countries it has created a demand and been successful.

Many people ask me for the two tickets that I get every 15th day for the Strangers Gallery. Those are the only tickets I get. There is an intense demand to see what happens in the House of Commons at all hours of the day and night. I also know that many school children want to see what is going on but cannot because of the congestion in the Strangers Gallery. The main impression that many of them have — an impression that is possibly accelerated by sound broadcasting — is that Parliament consists of wigs, maces and robes and is a rather stultified debating society. They have the impression that it does not apply to juveniles in Britain and does not have much to do with them.

Such pupils will certainly not get into the Strangers Gallery to see and hear a debate. Last week I was host to 24 children from Leicestershire. They were able to peer into the Central Lobby at the Speaker's procession, but all they could see was the Mace and the wigs. That is their impression of Parliament. Since 1978 there has been a growing desire to make children aware of what happens in the House of Commons, to make them appreciate the value of the arguments and the sincerity of the place. Unless we make them appreciate those things and give them an opportunity to observe proceedings in the Chamber perhaps via the TV camera, then future generations may not have a Chamber in which we can debate as we are doing today.

A few years ago I was trapped in Strasbourg, waiting in a hotel for a Council of Europe session which did not begin until the evening. There was a vote of no confidence in the French Government and the debate was televised live. My French is mediocre, but I could understand enough to know that it was a riveting debate, although the cameras portrayed the Members deploying arguments for and against. It was done in great detail. The cameras gave shots of Deputies cheering and jeering. Although my French is rusty, I was able to gather the essence of the arguments. Ever since I have held the opinion that hon. Members have no right to keep out young people or anybody else in Britain who wants to see the whole of what goes on in this place. The sooner that happens, the better.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup is not present at the moment. For the first time I find myself agreeing with everything he said. That is rare, although I have been in the House as long as my right hon. Friend.

We do not want to rely on Select Committees. We are public servants and have a duty to the public to let the cameras in so that the people can understand the arguments. The sooner we let them in, the better. The people who are against progress, by opposing the television cameras, are the descendants of those who kept the general public out of here until 1845 by passing an annual sessional order. Until 1913, such people kept the press muzzled. It was not until 1909 that the *Official Report* was established. The only reason for its establishment was that various leaked reports were so inaccurate that it was felt desirable to establish an official record. As I say, until 1909 they fought against having the press in here at all, and until 1919 those same people kept women out of the Press Gallery.

The House of Commons must move ahead. We have to show the country that there is much of which to be proud here, and the sooner we let in the cameras the better.

7.38 pm

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): Over the years that I have been in the House of Commons, I have voted for television coverage of the House. We all must learn by experience. I agree entirely with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that it is our privilege to change our minds. I have changed my mind on a number of issues. I changed it on the Common Market. I was originally in favour of entry into the Common Market, then I came out against it and lost a certain position as a result. At one stage in my life I thought passionately that everything Israel did was more or less without criticism, but nowadays I take a rather different view.

I have changed my mind on this issue as well, and I have done so because of experience. We allowed radio into the House. Before that, in the mornings and evenings we used to get a fairly good report of our proceedings. Most hon. Members who had spoken in a debate were mentioned, and something of what they said was given. Even now, the late evening programme is much better than the morning one. In the mornings, we get not the reporting that we used to get but the views of the journalist. Indeed, we sometimes get far more of his or her views than of what is happening in the House. I get a little fed up with that.

I have been in the Chamber and heard first-class speeches by hon. Members who might not speak often or be the stars of the House or political stars in the country, but they have not been mentioned. There might be some argument for admitting television if we had a channel given over entirely for the purpose, but everybody has said that that will not happen. There is bound to be at least an edited channel.

We all go to party conferences and know that it used to be argued that, if television was allowed in, those at conference would play to the cameras. That has not happened. People forget the television, but I have been told that people have attended the conference, then watched it on television in the evening but have not recognised it as the same conference because it is edited. They say, "It was not the same conference that I was in."

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): It was the one you left.

Mr. Heffer: I have to tell the hon. Gentleman—no, I will not. He knows what I was about to say.

The editors decide to edit and some of the best speeches made at the conference, which are made by delegates who are there perhaps only once, are not covered at all.

Some of the best speeches that I have heard in the House are not the great oratorical feats; they are made by hon. Members who perhaps bored us at the time but whose speeches, when read and examined, turn out to be excellent. Such speeches would never get on television.

Mr. Spearing: They might never be made.

Mr. Heffer: My hon. Friend is right. I have reached my conclusion on the basis of experience of what has happened elsewhere.

Some hon. Members are regularly involved in television programmes. I have to admit that I have had my fair share. I suppose that I am no longer as photogenic as I was when I was 42. We get older, we lose a few teeth and our faces change. We are not the handsome young men that we were when we came here. However, I have gone along to a studio and been filmed for half an hour and asked all manner of questions——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: And you get two minutes.

Mr. Heffer: My hon. Friend is too kind. That happened to me once and I got about two seconds. Those two seconds followed an interview with a member of the Communist party with whom it appeared I agreed entirely. Perhaps they did the same with him. One tiny part of my interview was picked up and shown out of context. Will the same not happen here? Is it not possible that little bits of our speeches will be picked out and used as somebody else wishes?

Mr. Austin Mitchell: No.

Mr. Heffer: My hon. Friend is saying that the people who run television are above suspicion and never do any such thing. He must live in a world that is completely different from the one that I have lived in. Of course there are some television producers whom I would trust absolutely—if they assure me that something such as I have described will not happen, I know that it will not —but there are others who have told me that nothing will happen, whom I have believed and who have manipulated what I have said. I will never go near those producers again. There are many programmes on which I will not appear. I am occasionally asked whether I will appear but I say, "No, thank you very much. I have no intention of getting involved in your programme because

[Mr. Heffer]

I know that you will talk to me for 20 minutes, cut the interview and use it in a way other than what was intended."

I have another argument against televising the House, on which I might lose those Conservative Members who have been with me so far. I am frightened about how televised material could be used by the establishment. The establishment can manipulate modern media dangerously. I do not think that of all media, although they are usually not up there in the Press Gallery. Some are, but the Gallery is usually empty.

Modern technology is marvellous. We used to be able to make a speech at five minutes to midnight on some important issue and it would be reported. At least the *Daily Telegraph* would have said something. Modern technology means that if we speak after 7 pm, it does not matter how good our performance is, the speech will not be heard of. It is therefore argued that it would be better for us to have television, as speeches would then be covered.

I thoroughly disagreed with somebody who recently suggested that sketch and parliamentary writers should not make fun of us. Frank Johnson is a great loss to the parliamentary system. I wish that he was still here. I am not being critical of those who replaced him, but he was better than any of them. That is a fact. I have had my leg pulled by Frank Johnson as much as, if not more than, most people. That is what politics is about and nobody objects to it.

We are not talking about that but about something more serious—the manipulation of the media in the interests of the establishment. That will not be in the interests of the people. I therefore do not believe that television coverage will be in the people's interests unless it is done strictly on our terms. Some argue that that is what we are being asked to vote for. I am not sure. It is not an option.

If it was suggested that all our proceedings were to be televised, I should think differently. Nevertheless, hon. Members would be hard put to cut themselves into five pieces. Members of Select Committees would have to put a notice up in the Chamber saying, "I am not here because I am on a Select Committee." Hon. Members may be on a party committee which happens to be meeting somewhere in the House or they may be members of a Joint Committee considering a specific issue and so may not be present in the Chamber.

Some members of the public believe that the Chamber is the only room in the House, but there are many others. One of the principal reasons for the recent depletion of attendance in the Chamber is that there are too many Select Committees. Hon. Members spend more time in Select Committees than they do in the Chamber.

It will be argued in my constituency that I was always in favour of televised proceedings. When I was asked about that in 1978 I said that I wanted television cameras in the Chamber to prove that we were not all comedians. Listening to some of the speeches tonight, I think that I was wrong; we have proved that we are all comedians. That is not a particularly good thing.

I ask the House to think seriously about the motion and consider whether we are to open up a process which will make it easier for manipulation by the television companies and for the establishment who will work in their own interests against the democratic process. I ask the House not to support the motion.

7.52 pm

Sir Paul Bryan (Boothferry): On 24 November 1966, 19 years ago next Sunday, the House debated a similar motion. The late Richard Crossman, as Leader of the House, led for the Government, and I, as shadow Postmaster-General, led for the Opposition. We both supported the motion; it was lost by one vote.

Mr. Heffer: I voted for it then.

Sir Paul Bryan: I believe that the House is as divided today as it was then. I am not so confident as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that the motion will be passed. In the past 20 years the arguments for and against this motion have remained unchanged. Those in favour argue that as television has become the main source of information for the bulk of the people it is only right that Parliament should not remain the one area of their lives that television cannot illuminate. Those against say that the invasion of the cameras will bring an end to Parliament as we know it. My hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Stokes) put that case in picturesque terms.

Although the arguments have remained the same, the balance has swung in favour of the ayes. In the 1960s it was thought necessary to produce evidence from polls and surveys to show that television was the main source of information. After 50 years of television, with television sets in 99 per cent. of homes and two sets in many of them, average viewing time is now three and a half hours per day. Television has clearly become so embedded in our national and private lives that the question is no longer in doubt. Television has become so dominant that even without cameras in the House it is the chief source of parliamentary news for the electorate, either through interviews or from the soundtrack of proceedings.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) said that the humiliation of politicians is now complete. Members of Parliament literally beg their local television producers to be allowed on their screens. It is Brian Walden, not Mr. Speaker, who decides whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be allowed to address the masses in their homes. That is so outrageous that our successors will marvel that we tolerated it for so long. We should not be sorry for ourselves, because we have brought that humiliation on ourselves. It is our constituents who have just cause for complaint.

During the miners' strike, thousands of unhappy people in the mining areas of Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire must have longed to hear their local Members—the only people who knew the local situation—speaking in the House on their behalf, but they had to be satisfied with whichever politician the producer of the programme thought would be good on the box. That is a scandal which should not be allowed to continue. I wish that the people of Northern Ireland could have seen our proceedings on Monday when the Prime Minister made her statement and answered questions. It was an impressive hour, and the genuine concern of the whole House for Northern Ireland could not have been shown so vividly by any other form of communication.

Mr. Winnick: I agree, and my next comment will not be the final point in the argument, but if people have such a strong wish to see what is happening here, it is interesting to note that we have not received any letters from our

constituents on the subject. The only letter that I received was from my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell).

Sir Paul Bryan: I do not find that at all convincing. In every country in which the televising of proceedings has been established the public have been pleased and no one has wanted to throw the cameras out once they were in.

The arguments against televising the proceedings have been based on the arguers' estimate of what might happen after the advent of the cameras, fortified by varying measures of wishful thinking. Even after many years in the House I should not like to presume what will be the exact effect of television, but by now so many other legislatures have already accepted it that there is a great deal of evidence of its effect and we can now view the prospect with more knowledge and less fear. None of the 25 or more legislatures which have adopted television has subsequently rejected it. In every case the public have approved, usually strongly.

There are, of course, growing pains and early difficulties, such as playing to the camera. John Fraser, European correspondent of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, said in an article in *The House Magazine* earlier this year about the televising of the Canadian House:

"Within a relatively short time, however, everyone settled down and it is generally held today that the standard of debate is more dignified and pertinent. Playing to the cameras receives the same sort of internal contempt as playing to the galleries did, and there have been no really serious abuses".

We should not be too proud to concede at least the possibility that television could improve our proceedings here. Nobody can have welcomed the decline in attendance in the Chamber in recent years. I agree with the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who has not taken part in this debate, but who said in an article last year:

"The televising of Parliament would, I believe, reverse the trend to non attendance. The MP's need to communicate with the electorate which at present drives him to the television studio would then compel him to be present in the Chamber. With more people in the Chamber, the sense of a proper debate would be reconstituted. The Chamber not the television studio would again become the place where important arguments were made and contested."

Mr. Crouch: I suggest that this place would be no longer a Chamber, but would be a television studio. Where would the cameras go? Already 200 Members have nowhere to sit. This is an intimate assembly and the result would be that many of the few seats that we have would be taken up by television cameras.

Sir Paul Bryan: The technical difficulties are not the strongest part of my hon. Friend's argument. If modern cameras are introduced, I do not believe that there will be any problems.

Despite the reassuring experience in Canada and elsewhere, no Parliament is exactly similar to another, and ours is unique. Therefore, we ought to approach the venture with care and base it upon our own broadcasting practices. Under the British broadcasting system, companies and the BBC have great editorial freedom, but, almost unknown to the general public, they operate under very definite guidelines which they cross at the peril of losing their licences. For instance, I recall that Granada was required every week to put out seven hours of local interest programmes. The ITV companies must not exceed a quota of 14 per cent. of foreign transmissions. The ITV network has to screen 104 hours of adult education programmes. That is a strong reason why British television caters far more for minorities than does television in other countries.

Mr. Heffer: Is the hon. Gentleman declaring an interest? I know that he has an interest in television. He should have told the House about it.

Sir Paul Bryan: I must have told the House a hundred times of my connection with Granada, and I am happy to do so once more. I apologise for not having done so at the beginning of my speech. The Parliamentary Broadcasting Committee which no doubt would be set up should, like the IBA, lay down appropriate guidelines. As a start, I suggest that on every parliamentary day Channel 4 should be required at 10.30 each evening to present a half hour daily summary of the proceedings of Parliament. A full hour should be devoted to a weekly summary at a peak hour each weekend.

Broadcasters will say, as they say about the House of Lords, that on many days the parliamentary programme would be too thin to support a half hour summary. That is because they disdain the minority audience. Yesterday's debate on Okehampton would not have drawn a national audience. Nevertheless, it would have been of the greatest interest to the people of Okehampton.

Mr. Ron Lewis (Carlisle): Who will do the editing? Will there be an editorial board, or will this be left in the hands of the BBC or ITV? If we allow this experiment to take place, there ought to be parliamentary control.

Sir Paul Bryan: That would be a matter for the Committee. If the Committee decided that the editing should be carried out by the BBC-ITV, so be it. If the BBC-ITV did not do it satisfactorily, a unit would have to be formed by the House.

Mr. Lewis: But would it work?

Sir Paul Bryan: This is the procedure in other legislatures, so there is no great difficulty about it. If the editing is unsatisfactory, the House will not sit and suffer. It will be put right. In order to ensure success, I advocate a step-by-step approach, learning as we go along from our experience. I hope that in time all of our proceedings will be open to the cameras, but to begin with I would confine them to the Chamber. I agree with the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) that the timing of this experiment is important. If the motion is passed and the programme described by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House were to be followed, it would be possible to have the cameras in the House in a year's time. In my view, this would not give the experiment its best chance of success. There could not be a worse time than the period running up to a general election. That is a quite exceptional period. Therefore, I advocate that we should pass the legislation in this Parliament, with a view to introducing the experimental period at the beginning of the next.

8.5 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): In his last sentence the hon. Member for Boothferry (Sir P. Bryan) took words out of my mouth. In order to allay suspicions that this is a party political gimmick initiated by the Prime Minister, I suggest that no decision should be implemented until after the next general election. I agree with a great

[Mr. Willie W. Hamilton]

deal of the hon. Gentleman's speech. For more than 20 years I have listened to every debate on this subject. To begin with the arguments were mainly technical—about the heating, the lighting, the cameras and the interference because of the presence of cameramen on the Floor of the House. Virtually all of those arguments have now been resolved. [HON. MEMBERS: "Not all of them."] The Committee that is to be set up will tell us whether or not those problems have been resolved. The important argument is the democratic one. I have always taken the opportunity to vote for the education of the people about what goes on inside Parliament.

Mr. Spearing: That is the vital issue.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, it is an absolutely vital issue.

All hon. Members must be disturbed by the woeful ignorance of people about what goes on inside Parliament. I regard this as an attempt not to trivialise Parliament, but to educate the public about how Parliament does its work. No hon. Member should be frightened of the extension of the democratic process. The intrusion of the cameras will carry risks with it. It will expose hon. Members almost indecently to the gaze of the public. But why should hon. Members be afraid of that? This is where the power should reside. We have little control over the power of Whitehall. This is the forum of the people and we are denying them their right to see it.

In the summer many people queue for entrance to the Strangers Gallery. Not all get in. I have long argued that, as an experiment, Westminster Hall should be used to provide live television coverage of the proceedings in this House. If that experiment had been conducted 20 or 30 years ago, all of these problems would have been resolved. I believe that such an experiment should go hand in hand with whatever decision is reached tonight by the House.

The arguments of my hon. Friends the Members for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) and for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) are based upon fear of the selectivity of the media. But selectivity has gone on for thousands of years. There is no way of preventing selectivity in a free, democratic society. Indeed, there is a good argument for increasing selectivity. If hon. Members believe that the cameras are being unfairly selective, the power lies in their hands to stop it.

In a recent intervention, my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis) made a valid point about editing. I was disturbed when the Leader of the House said that television broadcasters will have the right to decide what is screened. The House should have an editorial board. It should be made abundantly clear to television broadcasters that the purpose of this experiment is to educate and to inform, not to provide entertainment or titillation or to ridicule. That is the way to handle the issue.

The best argument in favour of this experiment was put forward by the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton). He is a well known expert on these matters. He said that if the proceedings of the House of Commons are televised, the House will never be the same again. I cannot think of a better reason for letting in the cameras. This House is a cesspool of conservatism. It is the most difficult thing in the world to change the procedures of this place. Now we have a chance. My one proviso is that it must be all or nothing.

Many hon. Members have pointed out that the most important, if least spectacular, work is carried out in Standing Committees and other Committees, including the 1922 Committee and the parliamentary Labour party committee. Both should be televised. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) suggested that the television cameras should cover Committees of the Cabinet, which is a good idea. The more the Prime Minister is exposed to television cameras, the better for the Opposition.

Therefore, let us get on with the experiment, let us see the results, and, at the end of the day, let the Government of the day say, "All right, we shall put the issue to the electorate at the next election." I am confident that the British people are yearning to see what goes on in the House and to be educated in the way that we conduct our business. That is the most democratic way of proceeding.

8.10 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): All hon. Members should remind themselves of the salient difference between this Chamber and the other place. We will all agree that the other place does not have to face the ballot box, whereas we do. Whether we freely admit it or not, we are in the self-promotion business. We want our constituents to be pleased with us, and to know that we are working exceptionally hard on their behalf — as, indeed, the majority of hon. Members do. We must get that message across. Therefore, if the House is televised, the temptation to be present in the Chamber rather than elsewhere will be irresistible.

Hon. Members may be surprised to hear that, at any one time, about 50 meetings are taking place within the Parliament buildings. They are held in Committee Rooms in the main building, in the rooms off Westminister Hall, in the Terrace rooms, and in conference rooms in the Norman Shaw south and north buildings. Those rooms are booked many times over, and sometimes on the hour, each hour. There are many demands on hon. Members—for example, to serve on Standing Committees and Select Committees, to attend all-party groups and one's own party groups, and to meet constituents and delegations of all sorts of groups. There is no end to the number of groups that wish to meet parties of hon. Members.

Sometimes regional Members must get together to meet various visitors to the House who have asked to see them. What on earth would happen if, for example, every hon. Member were doing his stuff and working hard in those various meetings, and then looked at the clock and said, "By George, we're on television." Suddenly rooms all over the building would empty as hon. Members scurried into the Chamber.

This is an important debate, but on par, no more than about 40 people have been present all day. That includes the Speaker, the Clerk, the Serjeant at Arms and the Doorkeeper. With television cameras, it would be a different matter altogether. Let us set the scene. If the Leader of the House kindly made room for something like the Ministurisation of Schrompling Pin Bill 1985, the Benches would be full of hon. Members, probably not one of whom would know what schrompling pin was. I shall send up the spelling to *Hansard* later. Nevertheless, the Chamber would be full because hon. Members would know that many of the disabled, the elderly, and the unemployed would be at home watching television,

because they are television addicts and television is their great pleasure in life, and would be looking for them and asking "Where are they?". All the time hon. Members will have to explain that we have many matters to attend to, besides sitting in the Chamber.

Earlier in the debate, many hon. Members were nasty to the gentlemen and ladies of the press, and suggested that the press selection was narrow, and that, although they made wonderful speeches, not a word appeared in the newspapers the following day. We have short memories. The work that we do in the Chamber is only one small part of what we must do. Yes, this is where the laws of the nation are made, but all hon. Members know that, whatever wonderful speeches we make today, at 10 o'clock when it is time to vote, other hon. Members will scurry to the Chamber from all over the building, most of whom will not have heard a word of our compelling arguments. They will look for friendly faces and troop through the Lobby that they think suits them best. What we say does not change a thing. In a way, the Chamber is a bit of theatre and we are the players, but at the same time we seek to do a responsible job.

Hon. Members cannot say that the press report only what we say in the Chamber. Remember this: when hon. Members table questions, the press approach them in the Lobbies, ask what is behind the question, request a quote on it and ask us to elaborate on it. We are also reported in that and many other ways. The press reports not only what is said in the Chamber but what is said at press conferences. Many of the press troop around the world with political figures, and work hard. It is unfair to say that they are extremely selective.

To be honest, one does not hear many brilliant speeches. We do not have in the Chamber today the great politicians of years ago. They did not have radio, television, or wonderful newspaper coverage. Newspapers came only with the advent of the railway system, when W H. Smith and others put newsagents at all the stations to distribute the news. That was the birth of the newspaper industry. Nevertheless, the great men of the past made their case heard, even without the facilities of today.

Today hon. Members have the *Official Report*, which anyone can purchase, radio coverage and good press coverage. Moreover, we ourselves are not slow in notifying the press of what we are up to. We are in the self-promotion game because the ballot box is behind us. The people in the other place do not have that constraint and, therefore, do not need to scurry to be present when the cameras are filming.

We have also been unfair to the British Broadcasting Corporation and, perhaps, the Independent Radio Network News. While I am speaking, across the road the tapes are running in the news rooms and teams of people are listening to our comments. Sometimes they are pleased, and sometimes they think that our debates are an absolute bore and take no interest. They are doing their jobs and working hard, but they can put only so much about a debate on the air.

The main interest is in the legislation that is passed, the main thrust of the debate, and the main opposition to the proposed legislation. But the press also seek to ensure that as many hon. Members as possible are mentioned in the time allocated. We should not grumble. Most of us do fairly well, and if we do not, we have not much to say and we are not worth recording. We cannot have it both ways. We need the help of the press, and we should not be critical.

What would Question Time today have been like if we had had television cameras? It would have been like a greenhouse. We would have had so much hot air and so many plants—the plants being the planted questions that we hear all the time — that it would have been like filming a greenhouse.

I have changed my mind. — [HON. MEMBERS: "Which way?"] You know me well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I always keep you in suspense. People have been kind to me and said, "Geoffrey, it is made for you. Get in there." I shall resist the temptation. I shall vote against having television cameras in the Chamber, even if they might suit my style nicely. I believe sincerely that it would be wrong to televise Parliament. Most of my constituents who hear the radio broadcasts of our proceedings think that we are a disgrace. I think that I am doing them a tremendous favour tonight by voting against television cameras in the Chamber

8.20 pm

Miss Betty Boothroyd (West Bromwich, West): The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is guaranteed to hold the full attention of the House. This evening he held the House in suspense, because only in the last few minutes did we learn how he would vote.

I cannot recall our debates on this subject as far back as others can, but whenever we have discussed televising our proceedings I have voted in favour of the principle. I shall do so again tonight, for a number of reasons. I shall do so in the belief that the House of Commons plays an important part in our national life and that Parliament and the Government should be as open as possible and accountable to the electorate. I believe that the public outside the building are interested in what we do. They have the right to as much information as possible about our proceedings and to the way in which we conduct our business.

Modern technology has made it possible for news and current events in remote parts of the world to be transmitted in minutes, or simultaneously, to the homes of millions of families. Viewers share the realities of Ethiopia and Colombia, as well as of Geneva. All such happenings have a direct connection with the public, and yet that same public cannot see for themselves anything at all of what we do in their name in this House. That is a considerable anachronism.

Parliament, and the House of Commons in particular, is an institution which creates public interest. When modern technology makes it possible for those who send us here to see our proceedings and how we go about our business, the argument must rest primarily with those who would deny people that opportunity, rather than with those who argue in its favour.

Many problems must be solved before we can make a start. I welcome the wise words in the motion which asks for a Select Committee to examine the details and to report back. I understand that the Leader of the House said that if we approve tonight's motion a Select Committee report will be presented to the House before a final decision is made.

I shall describe the problems, but not necessarily in order of priority. Coverage of the business of the House

[Miss Betty Boothroyd]

will cause a problem. Television companies, like newspapers, are interested in "news value". They are interested in what they think viewers want to see. We all have our own ideas about that. I have listened for the last four or five hours to what hon. Members think about what people want to watch.

The contest between the party leaders at Prime Minister's Question Time is of enormous interest outside, and will be of prime importance in terms of coverage, as will the exchanges between some Front-Bench Members who cling to the Dispatch Box at the opening and closing of major debates. The Select Committee will have to make it clear to the television companies that others in the House have informed opinions and can speak with direct knowledge about developments — or lack of developments—in their areas and can express opinions on world events and many other matters which might not be in line with their party or Front-Bench attitudes.

The broadcasters will need reminding that the House is a microcosm of the country as a whole and that Back Benchers are part of the reality of the House and its work. The Select Committee will need to know in detail the broadcasters' intentions when providing adequate coverage of Back-Bench opinion.

Many hon. Members feel as I do, and are concerned lest broadcasters pick out the sensational highlights and that the occasional punch-up will take precedence over a serious debate. The press already highlights the sensational rather than the worthy, just as some of us do sometimes. I expect that the broadcasters, with their statutory obligations and with a Select Committee with some control, will be more objective.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that all her anxieties about the media having the right to say what the public see of our work could be overcome by a separate television channel broadcasting the whole of our proceedings?

Miss Boothroyd: I should certainly support that, but that is not an option. I must deal with what is on the Order Paper.

Editorial control might cause problems. The television companies tell us that producing balanced, political television is no different in principle from editing the broadcasting of proceedings. When challenged, they speedily bring into play the regulations under the Broadcasting Act and in the BBC charter. Perhaps the principle is not so different, but my concern is with the implementation of that principle as it applies to the Chamber, which is an unknown arena. I am not certain that editorial control of programme content should remain entirely with the broadcasters. I hope that ground rules will be worked out by the Select Committee and agreed with the broadcasters to provide assurances to those of us who hesitate over that difficulty. I was pleased to hear the cautious remarks by the Leader of the House in that respect. If the motion is agreed, that will be a crucial part of the Select Committee's work. I shall certainly give the problem careful scrutiny and attention.

I do not have strong views about the timing of the start of the experiment. Perhaps we should take as long as possible, so that we can create the right atmosphere, with the right lighting and television cameras. The timing will be tied up with the type of equipment used. The location of cameras and lights will depend upon detailed technical tests. What the broadcasters and the Select Committee must bear in mind is that this Chamber is much smaller than the Chamber of another place. More importantly, it is an elected Chamber. Therefore, there is not a great deal of comparison.

Quite rightly, there would be strong objection if there were manned cameras on the Floor of the House. It is clearly in the minds of all who are discussing the matter that any permanent arrangement must involve remote-controlled and unobtrusive equipment. To conduct an experiment with hand-held cameras would give an entirely false impression of what the long-term arrangments would entail. Whatever the considerations of cost — and I understand that they would be considerable if remote-controlled equipment was used—I urge that we and the broadcasters ensure that any experiment is conducted on the same basis as any long-term arrangement. I do not want false impressions to be given to me or to other hon. Members. I want to know precisely how the arrangement will work.

The motion is couched in very modest terms. Although I have some reservations, I shall certainly vote for the principle embodied in the motion.

8.31 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West (Miss Boothroyd) in what is undoubtedly a great House of Commons debate. It is a privilege to take part in it.

The proposal before us is only that we should conduct an experiment. I cannot understand why so many hon. Members are against conducting an experiment. The experiment in the other place was so successful that I suspect they fear it will be successful here also. They are afraid that their prejudices will be removed if they are tested.

Televising this House would be neither an educational nor an entertaining experiment, although it may be something of both. It will certainly give the electorate an opportunity to see what is going on here, in their name. Presently they are restricted to a few minutes' coverage in the morning and the evening. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) put it well, although he and I are on different sides in this matter, when he said that the BBC in its morning programme had not done a great service to the serious broadcasting of this House.

Milton Shulman, in *The London Standard* recently, said that televising the other place had been a resounding flop ——[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Hon. Members may say that, but any programme put on for only a few minutes just before midnight will, in terms of audience take-up, inevitably be regarded as a flop. It is unfair to judge audience reaction by screening a programme at that time.

Even if audience numbers cause hon. Members to think that televising the other place has not been worth while, I have found that those who have watched it have a far greater respect for the institution of Parliament and for parliamentary proceedings than they had hitherto.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will my hon. Friend speculate on why the broadcasts occur late at night? Is it because they are not of prime interest to viewers?

Perhaps my hon. Friend will also address his mind to another part of Milton Shulman's article, when he said that the cameras would be more interested in personalities than in policies.

Mr. Alexander: I accept that is a danger, but I would expect the Select Committee to deal with that. It would be unfair to judge audience take-up solely on the time that the programme was screened.

We need a greater awareness among the public of what we are doing here. My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) put the matter well when they said that people were queueing to get into this place to see what was happening. It is rare that we can obtain two tickets for constituents to come into the House——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend accept that people sitting in the Strangers Gallery see everything, warts and all? People watching 12 to 14 minutes will see only selected excerpts.

Mr. Alexander: I fully accept my hon. Friend's point. However, I resent the fact that the opportunity to see what is happening in this place is so limited. I hope that people will see what is happening, warts and all.

Television is so much a part of people's daily lives that we would be unwise and backward-thinking if we, in this place of all places, were to try to exclude it. This is not a private club. Whether we like it or not, we are public servants, even though we may be public servants of an unusual kind.

Some hon. Members may abuse the facility that television coverage offers. However, we have often seen hon. Members, on both sides of the House, perform in a manner that we wish their constituents and the outside world could see. The House should act a little better at times. I believe that television will be a civilising influence on both our behaviour and our proceedings.

There is a fear that the media will go exclusively for trivia. That is a hazard we must risk in the interests of opening the House to the general public. I am sure that the media will find that if it concentrates on trivia and the silly moments of the House, its audience take-up will be much lower than if it gave a serious report and account of what goes on in this place.

If people want to watch comedians, chat shows and general rubbish, they will switch on their televisions at 5, 6, or 7 pm on a Saturday. They will not switch on a parliamentary broadcast if they want to see that. Most legislatures in the free world have introduced television in one form or another. None that I have heard of has argued that television should be removed from their proceedings and lives. They all have safeguards against abuses. I hope that our Select Committee will provide a safeguard.

I said that we are not a private club. Nor are we a private debating society. We are here to communicate our views as best we can to the widest possible audience so that we may gain acceptance of those views both here and in the country.

Today I am speaking to a handful of hon. Members. All the newspapers have gone to bed. My fourpennyworth will certainly not be reported on either "Today in Parliament" or "Yesterday in Parliament". I make no complaint about that. However, television in this Chamber might give someone speaking late at night a greater opportunity to exercise his skill—the skill with which he was sent here —to communicate as best he can on behalf of his constituents. We are, above all, communicators, but we communicate to an infinitesimal number of people outside, including our constituents, when we speak in this Chamber.

If we turn our backs on this opportunity tonight, we shall do a grave disservice to the people of this nation. If we accept it, we shall be able to share our debates on issues, great and small, affecting the nation to an extent never before possible. People are not convinced of our relevance today. Some people in Britain, if given the opportunity, would undermine our democracy, our way of life, and this House. If we share with the nation our work and the way we go about doing it, we shall enhance respect for the system. By agreeing to the televising of our proceedings, we shall be doing that in full measure.

8.41 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I was elected to this House in the 1979 general election. On the first day that I came here, instead of going to claim my locker and desk, my first action was to walk into the Chamber, stand at the Bar and ponder over where I would sit for the period that I would spend in Parliament.

I decided to sit in the seat that I now occupy, and I have sat here ever since. I chose this seat because I wanted to occupy a position from which I could oversee the Government Dispatch Box. I had heard repeatedly over the years arguments deployed, for example, by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) to the effect that the House of Commons, and in particular this Chamber, was all-important.

I had been told that any new Member had all sorts of opportunities open to him to represent his electorate, such as making direct representations to Ministers and their Departments and by correspondence. However, a good and effective Member of Parliament, I was informed, should concentrate on using this Chamber and ensure that the focus of his attention was the Government Dispatch Box. I remain convinced that that is the crucial point on which we should concentrate our debates.

I rapidly learned that, though Members of Parliament, we are tradesmen in the sense that we have a craft. Our craft is to know how to use this Chamber and its procedures and to intervene in debates in a way that has impact. We must argue our case, but most of all we must be able to press Ministers at the Dispatch Box on important issues.

I have learnt over the years that, if pressed in the right way, a Minister at the Dispatch Box will respond. Indeed, Ministers have been known when speaking from the Dispatch Box to change their position, having become aware of the hostility from the Floor of the House towards what they were proposing. Ministers have had to return to their Departments and complain to their civil servants about the nature of briefing material, which they felt was inadequate to deal with the level of opposition by Opposition Members.

I oppose the televising of our proceedings for a simple reason, and I tell that story of my coming into Parliament as the background to that reason. It is that, in the practice of our craft, we in this Chamber must sometimes do things that are ugly, and the public will not wish to see them.

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

They are practices which some would describe as lacking in decorum, although they are crucial to the way we conduct ourselves in the Chamber.

A sedentary intervention, or even a series of them, in the speech of a Minister can have the effect of pressing him so much that he may modify his position. That can happen at the Dispatch Box or in subsequent debate. Those pressures may be crucial. However, if the public saw those pressures being applied — I say that irrespective of Government and from whichever Benches they are applied; hon. Gentlemen sitting on the Government Front Bench below the Gangway have applied pressure on their own Ministers—and saw us applying our craft in such an ugly way, it might incur their wrath. That could happen if such ugliness were displayed on the television screens of the nation.

An example of that occurred some years ago, I am told, before I arrived here. I gather that the present Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster occupied a seat on the Opposition Front Bench below the Gangway for five years and that he was known affectionately as the Chingford skinhead. I am told that he was a most effective opponent of the then Labour Government. Indeed, I have been informed that some Labour Ministers feared him — *[Interruption.]* Former Labour Ministers admit that he was a formidable opponent in opposition.

Today, some of my hon. Friends who occupy seats on the Opposition Front Bench below the Gangway are equally vociferous and effective in their opposition to the Government, as are some hon. Gentlemen who occupy seats on the Government Front Bench below the Gangway. They know that they are effective when they challenge their own Ministers.

Can hon. Members afford to let their constituents see them practising their ugly craft? *[Interruption.]* Yes, it is ugly. On occasions it may be considered acceptable, but some people, without understanding the nature of sedentary interventions, may believe that they lack decorum. However, if such action has the effect of modifying a Minister's approach, let alone changing Government policy, the hon. Member adopting it has been effective.

If the television cameras are allowed in, some of my hon. Friends who sit on the Opposition Front Bench below the Gangway — and some hon. Gentlemen who sit on the Government Front Bench below the Gangway and who, without the cameras, are courageous enough to criticise their own Ministers — may feel constrained in their attitude — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It is all very well for hon. Members to say no, but I am laying down my marker in the belief that the intrusion of the cameras will constrain hon. Members in the way they practise their craft. I rest my case on that, and time will tell whether what I have said is correct.

8.50 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I have had the benefit of listening to most of the debate, but I have the disadvantage, therefore, of not being able to say a great deal that is new. It is important for the House to focus on the terms of the motion and to note carefully that it invites the House to approve in principle the holding of an experiment on television broadcasting. The motion—I am sure unwittingly—is somewhat misleading. Either we approve the principle of television coverage or we do not. The issue is as straightforward as that.

I am against the proposal, for reasons upon which I shall touch. I would support the idea, if necessary, if we were initially to set up a Select Committee to investigate all the issues before there was any question of a decision in principle being taken. The idea of approving an experiment and then setting up a Select Committee to examine the consequences of the experiment is to take things in the wrong order. I was only partly reassured when my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said that there might be an opportunity for a final decision at a subsequent stage.

My reasons for opposing the principle can be stated simply. They closely resemble some of the arguments which have been advanced by some of my hon. Friends. I am sure that the evidence tells us that television has a tendency to distort, sensationalise and trivialise the events that it seeks to portray. If the House is not convinced of that argument, it must understand from the works of Mr. McLuhan and others that it has been demonstrated pretty clearly that television is qualitatively different from other media of mass communication. In many instances television personnel do not want to behave in a way that will have that result, but the outcome is inherent in the imperatives of the medium—for example, brevity and what producers call "good television". There is a ratings war between the various television companies and the likelihood is that it will hot up.

Television is a medium which serves to create impressions rather than conveying information. It encourages instant viewer response rather than mature and thoughtful reflection. Unlike newspapers, which allow the reader to turn back a page or to re-read a paragraph, or radio, which allows for real concentration and reflection, which is possible when we listen to something intently, television merely creates images and impressions. Whenever audience polls are conducted, when a representative cross-sample is asked whether it remembers one thing that anyone has said during a television programme, the responses show that the majority can remember nothing of the content. That goes for educated people as well as for those who have not had the good fortune to receive a reasonable education.

If we want to convey serious and complicated ideas, television, which has many other strengths, is not the appropriate medium. However, we are trying to grapple with, discuss and convey serious and complicated ideas during the bulk of our proceedings.

If television coverage of our proceedings in the Chamber were introduced, I believe that it would have far-reaching and unintended effects on our procedure. It would increase pressure for the prior organisation and manipulation of parliamentary debates. There is enough of that already, thanks to the usual channels. There is no doubt that it would lead us to copy the House of Representatives in the United States. Increasingly in that forum a representative can speak on the floor of the house only if he has an ex officio right to do so for a specified period. That procedure would work against anyone who saw a need, in the interest of his constituents, to filibuster. It would work also against the interests of spontaneity. I think that it would damage the quality of our debates in the Chamber.

Such a tendency would increase the pressure for equal time for the parties, or for more equal time to reflect the balance of votes won in the country. We all know that this is an issue just below the horizon in the overall political debate, especially between the alliance parties and the Labour party in the present Parliament. This would merely result in an awkward twist to that problem. It would increase also the pressure for the timetabling and programming of what we do in this place and so work against the interests of individual parliamentary initiative and the sort of spontaneous combustion which, as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) mentioned by implication, is such an essential part of our parliamentary work.

If television were to be introduced, it would create a minefield of editorial disputes between the media men and the politicians. We only fool ourselves if we think otherwise. There would be disputes over the selection of the material to be emphasised in what must necessarily be short television programmes. There would be disputes over alleged trivialisation and sensationalism of the issues in the interests of grabbing and maintaining the public's interest. No producer will hold on to a public affairs programme for very long in the face of commercial imperatives—all television has these imperatives behind it in various forms—if he does not obtain the necessary ratings. There would be disputes over the allocation of screen time between the parties. There is enough argument now about party political broadcasts and the carve-up of time that is involved. That argument would be extended to parliamentary proceedings.

The minority parties would argue for more equal time on the strength of their share of the popular vote. The official Opposition would argue their corner on the basis of their time-honoured position in the House. The governing party would argue its corner on the strength of its electoral victory and its parliamentary majority. In other words, there would be a minefield of potential editorial difficulty.

If the House were to control these editorial issues, I suspect that many members of the media would soon lose interest in the idea altogether. It would be a price that they would not be prepared to pay, and it would be contrary to one of their basic assumptions. That is an assumption to which my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has already drawn our attention. If television producers were to have the last word, that could be the cause of endless suspicion and resentment between this place and the media world. I do not think that we need that. We need creative tension between the fourth estate and the House but we do not want the mutual recrimination and suspicion that might be generated if producers were to have the last word in this matter.

Mr. Shore: Why does the hon. Gentleman think that the difficulties which he has aptly described will be greater with the introduction of television cameras than they have been during the past seven years of broadcasting in the House?

Mr. Forman: The main reason why the difficulties would be greater stems from my first argument about the qualitative difference of television from other media of mass communication. All the evidence shows that the impressions and images that television is capable of creating — this happens sometimes unwittingly — are infinitely more powerful, and therefore potentially more damaging, than anything which is broadcast over the radio or printed in the columns of the press. For that reason, I suggest that right hon. and hon. Members would become infinitely more concerned about the consequences.

My final major reason for being opposed to the motion is that the very idea of televising the House, if carried forward, might in the long run further undermine the representative principle which is still the basis of our parliamentary democracy. We are all supposed to stand in a vital intermediate position between the mass electorate and Her Majesty's Government of the day. We can choose to act as filters, or as megaphones, of public concern. We are elected to the House to debate seriously, to reflect on the issues and to reach our conclusions by vote.

We would not be able to discharge those responsibilities properly if we moved inexorably with the televising of our proceedings to a form of direct and instant appeal to what would be the court of public opinion. At the end of that road lies a sort of Orwellian push-button democracy which would have a heavy bias against public understanding and be wide open to cynical attempts at media manipulation, whether by politicians or by producers.

During the debate, two main points have been put by the proponents of the motion. They must be answered. The first is that somehow the public has a right to know and that, with the availability of modern television technology, we should fulfil that right. The answer to that fundamental point is that the public can exercise its right to know at present in a number of ways — people can sit in the Strangers Gallery, as they are doing today, and they can watch television reports of our debates and proceedings on the "9 o'Clock News" and "News at Ten".

Another argument is that, all the time the public is supposed to come here to listen to us. That may be convenient from one point of view, but it is a fundamental part of our duty as politicians to be in our constituencies as often as possible to communicate with the people who returned us to this place and with the people who did not vote for us. The old-fashioned arts of public persuasion, communication, public meetings and use of the local press and media generally are all too easily glossed over on the assumption that all that matters is that these dreadful instruments should come into the heart of our proceedings.

The second major argument is that televising our proceedings would revive public interest in the working of our parliamentary democracy at a time when it is said to be flagging. Yet, on the contrary, there are obvious reasons why public interest in the Chamber and the workings of our parliamentary democracy may be flagging, and they have nothing to do with television. I offer the House a few headline suggestions as to those reasons. There are the deadlines imposed for printing in Fleet street, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) said. There are the entertainment imperatives of the television programmes. Above all, there is the fact that most of our debates are organised along party lines with Whips and largely predetermined party votes. If what was "said" in argument—as was the case in the middle of the 19th century, in the halcyon days of this Chamber —was to determine and influence the outcome of the vote at the end of a debate, one thing is sure: there would be far fuller regular attendance in the Chamber; people would listen to the arguments and would occasionally be persuaded by them; and there would be a much more favourable public impression of our proceedings.

[Mr. Forman]

I oppose the motion because the case for televising our proceedings has not been made out conclusively, and certainly not in relation to televising this Chamber's proceedings. If the motion were passed and we were to proceed to televise, let us by all means begin by following the advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart). He pointed out that there is discretion in these matters in the United States Senate and, in contrast to the House of Representatives, cameras are allowed in to the special committees, which are analogous to our Select Committees. If we want a real-life experiment with broadcasting in the Palace of Westminster, let us try that. But let us keep it out of this Chamber until we are all more certain of the overwhelming benefits.

9.2 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): More than 200 years ago, in 1783, the House of Commons expressed its concern, by a resolution, at what it called the "great presumption" of journalists in reporting its proceedings. It went on to declare that it was

"a high indignity and notorious breach of privilege to print accounts of debates".

I heard echoes of that resolution in the speech of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). In those days, it was even argued that printing reports of debates in the House would tend to make Members of Parliament accountable for what they said inside the House to people outside it. When I was elected in June 1983, that was my understanding, that I was accountable to the people outside the House.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) talked about representative government and the fact that we make ourselves accountable by going to our constituencies. I believe that we should make ourselves accountable also by ensuring that our constituents know what we are doing and saying inside the House, and what work we are undertaking. That is not being done at present. The press, as has already been said, publishes little of what is done in this House. To a large extent, that is because, although television has become the medium of entertainment in this country, the so-called popular press has become a type of "comic cuts" medium.

The House of Commons is harmed by not submitting itself to the most popular, modern and powerful medium of mass communication. If we are interested in allowing the outside world to know what is happening in the Chamber, we should be prepared to allow it to see on television what is happening.

We are living in the television age. Youngsters are brought up on television almost from birth. In many cases, people want entertainment. However, I argue with hon. Members when they say that people switch on the television set for entertainment only. Does anyone suggest that television was not performing in the public interest when a few months ago it showed the desperate plight of the people of Ethiopia? What a response that evoked from the British people. Do right hon. and hon. Members not believe that televising the proceedings of the House would evoke a response from the British people, and that they would not start to ask questions about what happens in Parliament, what our procedures are, why we do this, why we do that and why we should not do it another way?

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington fears that television may bring about changes and that we may suddenly modernise our proceedings. Many hon. Members will say, "Not before time." The British people might realise that we live and work in an antiquated building and that our procedures are likewise antiquated.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that many hon. Members would accept television if it were on the Canadian model and the whole proceedings were televised? What representation of our work in this place, including work on Select and Standing Committees, does he imagine can be shown in approximately 12 minutes' television coverage?

Mr. Wareing: I am glad that the hon. Lady made that point. Like her, and like the predecessor of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), Aneurin Bevan, I believe that there should be a special channel for the House of Commons.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: We are not to have that.

Mr. Wareing: No, but there is no reason why we should not work towards it in the period leading up to cable television. All that is being asked for in the motion is that we set up a Select Committee. We have never had a Select Committee to study the detail and problems of televising this Chamber.

If we reject the motion, that will be perceived by the nation as Members of Parliament working in the same way and with the same aims for Parliament as our predecessors did in the 17th and 18th centuries when they barred the public from their representatives in Parliament.

The Kilbrandon report stated:

"People have tended to become disillusioned with Government — the general disenchantment may be largely attributable to a failure of communications."

I believe that to be the case. People have become alienated from Parliament. Parliament is modelled for them by what the so-called cynical popular press has manufactured. People who report in the *Daily Telegraph*, *Private Eye* and *The Sun* are there to tell the public not to be interested in politics. They are almost part of a press conspiracy to ensure that the people do not know what is happening in the House.

When people get into the habit of switching on their television sets to watch the House of Commons, they will take an increasing interest in debates. They will want to know where Members are if they are not in the Chamber. The televising of the House of Commons will be an educative process. It will enable people to understand what happens in Parliament. They have already seen the debates in another place, and more and more people understand what happens there. I want them to be able to see what we are doing here and in Select Committees.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The cameras will not be in the Select Committees.

Mr. Wareing: We do not know. The hon. Lady is intervening from a sedentary position. How delightful it would be to have that on television. The hon. Lady could make points to her constituents, but she does not want them to watch her on television. It will be a start if a Select Committee considers the matter in detail.

Time after time important statements on Government policy are made from the Dispatch Box. The only opportunity that the public have of seeing Ministers questioned on those statements is when Ministers are

called to the television studios to be interviewed by Sir Robin Day, Alastair Burnet or Brian Walden. No matter how professional those interviewers may be at their art, none of them is a democratically elected representative of the people. My constituents and the constituents of every right hon. and hon. Member have a right to see their Members putting questions to Ministers.

A great advantage of the House of Commons is that the grievances of individuals may be aired in the Chamber. Those grievances may reflect problems encountered by many others. We are preventing information from being put across to the electorate when we say that they cannot see those grievances being aired in the House of Commons, Ministers answering questions on statements or debates on major issues which affect their daily lives.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight)—I am sorry she is not here at the moment—asked an important question about the cost of televising the House. The cost could be regained to a considerable extent by piping the proceedings live for a subscription to universities, clubs, newspaper offices and anybody who wants to see the House of Commons in action. The subscription would more than pay for a television *Hansard*. In time, it would pay for cable television channels.

It is wrong for the broadcasting and television media to determine which politicians appear before the camera. A few weeks ago I was walking along a corridor in the building when I saw a gentleman walking towards me. I thought, "I recognise him. I am sure that I have seen him on television." When he went past, I said to myself, "My God, that was the leader of the Liberal party, and I do not often see him in the House."

Let us modernise our proceedings by passing the motion to inquire and investigate. The House of Commons will be a more prestigious institution in our democratic society and will no longer be alienated from the people. It will modernise itself for its benefit and that of the British people.

9.15 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): Having listened to the debate from the beginning to the present moment, I am grateful to have the opportunity to add a few words.

It is now five hours since my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House talked about the motion being a leap in the dark. I have listened carefully, but I have not been able to adduce a shred of evidence why that leap in the dark should in any way lead to any light. I am not convinced that anyone who advocates that the leap should be taken knows where it is leading. As was said by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) in his powerful remarks, we have a duty of stewardship in this institution. It is incorrect to lead off in a direction when that direction is unknown and the consequences are unforeseeable. The debate has not enlightened us in that direction; it is all supposition and emotion.

During the summer I visited Canada. Not unnaturally, I took the opportunity of asking, whenever possible of whoever possible, for views of the broadcasting and televising of Parliament in that country. I visited three provincial Parliaments and spoke to Members of the federal Parliament. What I found in no way supported benign statements about the performance of television in the Canadian Parliament.

The argument that has to be won by those who wish the motion to be passed is that the change is acceptable, quantifiable and manageable. There has been change in the House since broadcasting came in. It is not disputed that the House that is broadcast now is not the House that existed before broadcasting. That has been confirmed by several right hon. and hon. Members during the debate. Anyone who thinks that there has not been change and that there is not a different tempo when the House is being broadcast live has only to watch the point of order specialists leap to their feet when the little light is on in the Box in the corner.

Of late the Canadian Parliament has had occasion to consider its televising of proceedings. The committee charged with doing that produced a substantial report, under the chairmanship of James McGrath. He visited the House last week with a delegation from Canada. I had an opportunity to talk to him. He said that he would not go back, but I caught a certain reluctance in him to face the position that he had reached when he could not see how to get back. His report says:

> "The evidence of the past eight years suggests that television has caused only a few changes. For example members now applaud rather than thump their desks to signify approval."

I gather that the public did not like members thumping their desks, so the members now applaud. Mr. McGrath said that someone then discovered the standing ovation, so now they have standing ovations all the time. The report also says:

> "Members also tend to move around the chamber to sit at the desks behind the person speaking. Attempts to counter the impression that a member is talking to an empty House are not really successful. No one is really fooled"—

nevertheless it is done,

> "The game of musical chairs simply adds an artificial element that would be unnecessary if there were greater public understanding of the reasons why members are not always in their seats in the House of Commons."

The Canadian House has had television since 1977. It is remarkable that, after eight years of exposure, not one jot of further understanding has been achieved. So much for the thought that television will lead to the better understanding of this House. More needs to be done to achieve that, but in different ways.

On my visit to Canada I spoke to an Opposition spokesman about the competitive element in securing television time. He said that he made a good point—rather like the points made by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) — but without success because there was no television coverage. He did the same again — a good point, but no television coverage. The third time he said, "To hell with it. I am going all out for it." He employed histrionics, shouted, waved his arms in the air and tore at his hair. He said, "I got my coverage coast-to-coast on the news." The only trouble was that no one knew what he had said, and he did not feel very good about it. What a length to have to go to in order to secure television time. That goes against the reports we have heard about the idealism of the Canadian experience.

While I was there, a fish in a big greasy parcel was thrown on the Prime Minister's desk—[HON. MEMBERS: "A gift?"] Not a gift, and not very fresh, but it secured the attention of the television. The Member got his coverage. That may have been the practice before the Canadian House had television. That is what is meant when the report states that there has not been much change in the past eight years.

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

I could not find a member of the public who was anything but indifferent or derogatory about television. I did not speak to 18 million Canadians, but, out of interest, I spoke to people in the street, shops and stores. I visited the Quebec Parliament. The Clerk at the Table, who has just retired after 22 years' service, when asked for his views on the introduction of television, rolled his eyes to the ceiling, as only a French Canadian can, and said, "Ah, Monsieur"——

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): English!

Mr. Shepherd: We were speaking in English, because my French is not good enough, and my Canadian is even worse. He said, "The members like it, but they no longer talk to the Parliament; they talk to their constituents." We must beware of this constitutional matter, which relates to the stewardship point made by the right hon. Member for South Down. Burke said that he was a Member of Parliament first and a Member of Parliament for Bristol second. Members of Parliament here are supposed to address Parliament. There are other opportunities and avenues for addressing constituents. We must not be distracted from our work in addressing Parliament. Anything else is an abortion of what this place is—a forum for deliberation.

I received a similar response about the televising of the American House of Representatives. Speeches no longer have relevance, because they are directed towards far-flung constituents. Let us not fall into that trap.

Mr. Lawler: I do not know whether my hon. Friend has read an article by a former Clerk of the House of Commons of Ottawa—a Mr. Fraser—who says:

"What have been the results after the experience? In the main very positive indeed. The activities in the most important 'room' in Canada are being seen and assessed by an audience much greater than was contemplated by the most enthusiastic proponents of parliamentary broadcasting."

There is also evidence from the Speaker of the time, Mr. Jerome, who speaks favourably about the effects of televising the House.

Mr. Shepherd: I am aware of what I might call the Establishment comments. I was referring to the gentleman I came across who recounted his views. I also watched television while I was there, and saw no fair treatment of Ministers at the Dispatch Box. The Tory party in Canada has enough troubles at present without everyone having a field day at Ministers' expense. When I watched the televised proceedings on the news, I did not see a balanced picture of what had happened in the House that afternoon, only the Minister in an acute state of discomfiture and the Opposition in a state of triumph. That may be the realistic position, but I could not see on television whether the Minister had had better moments before or after. I saw only the part where he was most discomfited. I had a profound distrust of what I was watching and wondered whether it was right.

Mr. Marlow: It was good entertainment though.

Mr. Shepherd: That is perfectly correct. Indeed, I thought that it had boiled down to entertainment only. Although the proceedings are broadcast the entire time that the House is sitting, it is open to news editors to select those parts that they wish to show for onward transmission.

I hope that the House realises that the case for change has not been made today, and that there are pitfalls. I end with the remarks of a robust housewife from Halifax, Nova Scotia, who took me figuratively by the lapels and said, "The House of Commons in Ottawa has not benefited at all from television. Do not let them do it to you".

9.26 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): For reasons that are fairly obvious, Mr. Speaker, I shall be brief. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) for introducing this subject and for her generosity in agreeing to curtail her remarks at the end of the debate to allow some more of us to speak, although she knew that I at least would speak against her.

The hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) said that he believed that the machinery of television should not be allowed to influence our decisions. I wish to comment as a television producer and director—I believe the only one in the House—on what the machinery will do to the House. It has been suggested that we could use a micro-camera. Those cameras are being developed, but they do not exist. It is suggested that it will be unnecessary to light the Chamber for television. However, for good colour television, the Chamber will have to be lighted.

As an outside broadcast director, I know that we shall need four cameras. If we cannot hang them under the Gallery—at present, we cannot—we shall have to put them at each end of the Chamber. If we do so, we shall obtain extremely odd shots of those sitting on the Front Benches. If we light the Chamber from above, all the shadows will come down — any television lighting director could tell us this — and those sitting on the Front Benches will look extremely odd — [HON. MEMBERS: "They do already."] It is tremendous, Mr. Speaker; all one needs to do is feed them a line. That would be even more the case if we appeared on television.

There is no doubt that the technical necessity for television will change the Chamber. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) said, in time, the technological developments may be such that miniaturised cameras may be possible, but at present no automatic remote control camera could respond swiftly enough to an hon. Member intervening in a speech.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: That is just not so.

Mr. Gale: The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) has intervened, as he so often does, from a sedentary position. He is wrong, wrong, wrong and wrong again.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman's statement is incorrect. Those cameras already exist and will have been purchased by British broadcasters before we start the new Session next November.

Mr. Gale: I will not ask the hon. Gentleman what the response has been to those remote-controlled cameras, because I do not wish him to intervene again. Allow me to tell the Chamber, as a television director, that they do not react swiftly enough to record an intervention from another hon. Member. That is the technicality of it. The Chamber will have to be changed in structure. Holes for cameras will have to be cut in the back, and for colour contrast, lights will have to be put in. It is simply a technical fact that the Chamber will be hot. Hon. Members may choose to accept or reject that, but it is a fact.

Mr. Holt: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gale: No, I do not have time.

The only reason advanced for introducing television to the Chamber is that, in some way, it will enhance democracy. How will it do that? All the work of the Chamber will not be transmitted. If we record all the work of the Chamber, edit it and then transmit some of it, that will be phenomenally expensive, because we are talking about many hours of television recording and editing for very little transmission. We have a choice. We either show all of it, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said earlier, or we transmit some of it. If only some of it is transmitted then, with great respect to the hon. Members who have said otherwise, the editorial control will not be in the hands of this Chamber.

As a producer and director of television, I am aware of the exact processes involved. At the end of all this, will it be worth it? The hon. Member for Great Grimsby quoted some inaccurate figures about the television viewing of the Lords. I will give the correct figures. Three debates were covered live on Channel 4 on 23 June, 20 March and 15 April. The average audience for those programmes was 439,000 and the maximum audience of 747,000 was for the first debate, and it obviously had curiosity value only. We are therefore talking about a maximum viewing figure at any one time of 747,000. Any producer or director faced with those figures at any reasonable time of day—those programmes were transmitted at peak time and broadcast live—would have his programme taken off. The late-night viewing figures went down to virtually nothing at all.

We are talking about destroying the atmosphere of this Chamber and, if we are going to record it all, it will cost £2·5 million a year. That will be to transmit something and there is no evidence that anybody will watch it. Not one of the hon. Members who spoke in this debate has had a letter from anybody saying that he wished to watch it. There will be a minimal audience and no return. If we wish to introduce more democracy to the Chamber, we have the apparatus to do that in front of us. If we genuinely wish to take the British Parliament to the British people, the microphones are here, and we can dedicate a radio channel to do that. There are also microphones hanging in the other places that need to be heard, the Committee Rooms. We have the means for live broadcasts from this House and from the Committee Rooms.

I will be standing with the chairman of the Back-Bench media committee at the entrance to the "No" Lobby trying to persuade hon. Members who have not heard the debate to go into that Lobby, because we both believe that televising of this House would be profoundly bad.

9.34 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I do not wish to repeat the many arguments already made, but it is interesting to note that, before this debate started, we were told that, like death and taxes, it was absolutely inevitable that the House would vote in favour of having television. Those hon. Members who are most experienced in the knowledge of the media spoke about the effects that the media can have. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) were honest enough to say that, if they were outside this House, they would press for televising, but because they are Members they do not believe it would benefit this House.

In the great days, the high days and the tragic days of the war when Winston Churchill came back from wherever he had been, whether it was America or the Middle East, he said, "Before I do anything I must report to the House". He said that in his memoirs. The Prime Minister of that day, as at any time, regarded reporting to the House as his most important task. We have been pushed by the media—we should be honest enough to admit it—into reading nearly everything about policy, irrespective of which party is in power, in the press, and sometimes weeks, if not months, before a statement is made here with all gravity. It is this House that must decide ultimately.

It has been argued, I think rather pathetically, that we cannot get the problems of our areas across without television. It seems that yesterday's debate on the Okehampton bypass would have captured peak time in Devon and Cornwall. That six-hour debate was important for the people in those counties, but how much time would the media have given it? If the television producers wanted to impress on us how good the debate was, we might have got 12 minutes. How much of the work that hon. Members have done for their constituents and their areas would have come over in that time? Precious little.

I have sat through most of the debate. What we decide today is important. The House is not just a talking shop. It is a place where great decisions are meant to be made and debated. I contend that we should not admit the cameras, in spite of my natural shyness of the media. My hon. Friends the Members for Gravesham and for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) are shy of the media. However, nearly all the right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken against the televising of this House have a good relationship with the media. It is sometimes easier to catch the eye of the media than the eye of the occupant of the Chair and we are able to put over our views as we know that, as long as we are being interviewed live, we cannot be misquoted. One of the great things about live interviews is that one is in control. If we make a 20-minute speech here and only seven seconds of it is used in a news clip, that speech can be made to represent 15 views. That will happen. We must not always think of the media being in the hands of the kind, the good and the honest. It is not always so.

Until we have sorted out the problems, the House would be wrong to give in to those who say that television is inevitable. I hope that we shall at least keep control of our House and of our destiny. To say that everybody wants television is to use the argument of tyrants and those who try to push and shove people into doing something that they know that they should not do. We are elected. We can be appointed and disappointed at any time. We do not need the media to push us into anything. We should vote for our conscience and the future of the House. In the end, we, not television and not radio, will answer to the people. We are the elected ones.

9.38 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): There is one thing on which all right hon. and hon. Members agree—that the gap between the House of Commons and the public is apparently increasing. Those who want us to vote in favour of the motion maintain that television will fill that gap.

If hon. Members vote in favour of the motion, they may increase the feelings of frustration and powerlessness among their constituents. Politicians speak to their

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

constituents daily in their drawing rooms and kitchens and the public cannot get back at them. If the public were able to see the proceedings in the Chamber but could not come here to make a speech, the division between hon. Members and constituents could conceivably be greater.

Hon. Members can take many steps to close such a division. They could make sure that *Hansard* appears in every public library and in the libraries of every secondary school. I do not know whether that would be possible to implement at present. Years ago the weekly *Hansard* could be purchased from bookstalls, but today the daily part costs £2·50. I believe that *Hansard* should be available throughout the country at wholesale prices.

Many hon. Members have said in the debate that the function of a Member of Parliament is not restricted to the Chamber. Indeed, the majority of our time is spent outside the Chamber, however vital our function in the Chamber may be.

When the House was asked to support sound radio in the Chamber, we were told that the broadcasts would cover Select Committees. The media told us that they would give coverage to powerful Select Committees calling the Government to account. In fact, the only coverage of Select Committees is a BBC programme broadcast at 11 pm on Sunday on VHF only.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) that the Chamber is the hub of Parliament. The Chamber operates on motions, questions, debate and decision. There is also pontification, promotion of causes and probing of Government. Above all, there are good speeches of persuasion. Those are often the most effective speeches in the Chamber, but if speeches of persuasion are distorted by the media to create news value—and the media will be tempted to do that —distortion of our proceedings will be increased.

The trumpet soloists will be in the ascendancy if the motion is passed. I ask hon. Members to consider what a Beethoven symphony might sound like if it was played only from the score for the brass and timpani sections. That is not an unlikely analogy if, through the exigencies of the edited extracts, that is the view that the public are given of the Chamber.

There would inevitably be pressures on hon. Members and on how parliamentary business is carried out. If we wish the House to become a permanent, national, political television studio in an attempt to fill the gap between the public and Parliament which hon. Members have identified, we must adapt our priorities, proceedings and practices to suit the requirements and disciplines of the media. That is not the function of Members of Parliament.

In the Chamber, it is our duty to ensure the efficient dispatch of public business. That should not be done in secret. It should certainly be recorded. It may be broadcast in sound and it is published the very next day in *Hansard*.

Hon. Members must be publicly accountable — motivated by party passions and principles or those of our own deep convictions — but if the practices and proceedings which are the ball bearings of democratic government are in any way geared to requirements other than the proper dispatch of public business, democratic parliamentary procedures will be threatened. We shall be performing those functions to satisfy the requirements of one medium whereby we are accountable, rather than the requirements of parliamentary business.

Parliamentary democracy is very tenuous. Its gossamer threads are too fine to be subjected to the risks that those who support the motion would have us take. The House should seek other, more realistic measures to close the gap and defeat the motion tonight.

9.44 pm

Sir John Page (Harrow, West): My interest in voting today is to ensure that greater power and authority is given to this Chamber. I had a kind of road to Damascus conversion in the bath last Thursday morning and decided very determinedly that I would vote for the motion. This is a debating Chamber, however, and in a free vote we can be swayed by the speeches that we have heard.

As I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) in support of the motion all my confidence dissipated but, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) has said, one should not be ashamed to change one's mind, however frequently the pendulum swings. Soon aftewards, however, my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) spoke against the motion and all his arguments persuaded me that it would be quite wrong to vote against it. My hon. Friend said that instead of spending his afternoons in Committee, talking to disabled constituents or dealing with his correspondence, he would have to waste his time in the Chamber, and that poniard went straight into the wound.

In the light of that final revelation, I have decided to vote in favour of letting the cameras in — not only because I bought a carnation this morning at enormous expense in the belief that the cameras would already be here today, but because I believe that the televising of our proceedings, warts and all, will bring back greater power to our debates here, which is where it ought to be.

9.47 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page), I did not take a bath last week or this week for the purpose of conversion. I took a bath to listen to "Yesterday in Parliament" to find out what had gone on while I was doing my correspondence.

I shall vote with great confidence against the motion. Although I have been privileged to be a Member of the House for only two and half years, I believe that the intrusion of the cameras would be a grave mistake and would destroy the essential character of this place. I believe that it would turn the House into a television studio and theatre. The microphones do not intrude, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) so ably explained, the cameras would intrude a great deal.

We should no longer be looking to you, Mr. Speaker, and we should no longer be looking to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer). Some strange alliances have been formed today. I agree with everything that the hon. Member for Walton has said, which must embarrass the hon. Gentleman as much as it embarrassed my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) to agree with all that was said by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). The television cameras would intrude; the intimacy of the Chamber would be lost. It would become a studio or theatre. The press would interpret our proceedings. As the hon. Member for Walton so ably explained, it would choose the little nuggets that it wanted to televise.

This motion should be rejected out of hand. We should preserve the traditions of this great House. Those who want to hear our proceedings should listen to them on the radio. Better still, they should come and see us in action.

9.50 pm

Miss Fookes: I am almost terrified to open my mouth in case I change again the mind of my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Sir J. Page).

It is clear that the House is retaining a tradition, maintained over 400 years, of getting very hot under the collar about the reporting of its proceedings. Nevertheless, I repeat my profound conviction that television is a very powerful medium that this House cannot afford to ignore. People rely either completely or to a great extent upon what is presented to them on the television screen.

Many of the arguments that have been advanced against the televising of the proceedings of this House could equally be advanced against any reporting of its proceedings. We could continue the debate all night and firm convictions would still be held on either side of the argument. However, one way in which to test it would be by adopting the motion. It calls only for

"an experiment in the public broadcasting of its proceedings."

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) suggested that we should be voting for the principle. I take issue with him. We shall be voting for an experiment. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House made it abundantly clear that we shall have a further opportunity to reach a final decision. It would therefore be wrong not to allow the various views to be tested by means of an experiment.

In the motion — *[Interruption.]* I suspect that the general noise that I hear is an argument against the televising of our proceedings. Be that as it may, a Select Committee would be able to establish the ground rules. It would be made plain to the broadcasting authorities, whether ITN or BBC, that the House expects adherence to certain principles and that, if they fall short of those principles, we shall bring the experiment to an end.

The decision whether the experiment should go ahead rests with hon. Members. If it goes ahead, it will then be up to the House to decide whether to make the experiment permanent. Tonight we are not making a final decision.

Hon. Members: We are.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is making her case.

Miss Fookes: I differ from my right hon. and hon. Friends and from Opposition Members who say that tonight we should be making a final decision. The motion makes it quite clear that it would not be a final decision. We will have further discussions on the matter. Unless we make some attempt to sound out the matter, we shall never know whether my views or those expressed by hon. Members who feel that television coverage would be bad are correct. The House should at least give the opportunity for this limited experiment to go ahead. I shall be disappointed if the House does not make that one gesture towards television coverage of our proceedings.

In future we may extend television coverage, as many hon. Members wish, to Select Committees and Standing Committees, and even to having one channel which transmits our deliberations in full. The experiment would not prevent any of that from taking place. Indeed, it might facilitate that. For those reasons, I ask the House to think carefully before turning its back on the experiment.

It is relevant to consider the 18th century debates, when the House was extremely perturbed about the possibility simply of the newspaper reporting of our proceedings because many of the arguments advanced tonight are of that order.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I do not want my hon. Friend to finish a moment early because we are all listening to her argument with great care. Will she assure the House that if the Select Committee reports in favour of broadcasting and proposes a form of broadcasting which is acceptable to members of the Select Committee, the payroll vote will not be wheeled out in support of television coverage, as it was in support of a recent measure to which most of the House was opposed?

Miss Fookes: My hon. and learned Friend is using some of his courtroom tactics. He knows as well as I do that I am not responsible for the payroll vote.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have only three minutes left.

Miss Fookes: My case, which has been supported by many distinguished parliamentarians on both sides of the House, is sound and meets the needs of the latter part of the 20th century. Be that as it may, I hope that the House will at least give the opportunity for a limited experiment. In that spirit, I commend my motion to the House.

9.58 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I apologise for intervening at this late stage, but I have listened to most of the debate and am worried about a couple of points.

First, having had the opportunity to visit the Canadian House of Commons and, indeed, to steer the television cameras and sit in the seats of Canadian Members of Parliament, I know how uncomfortable it is. I assure the House that low-light cameras, which are tossed about like confetti in the House, will not be available to us for at least another five years. We shall have to bear a light level which will be uncomfortable in this assembly, which sits for longer than any other in the world. Those of us who must suffer on the Back Benches, sitting hour after hour waiting, hoping and dreaming to be called, know what it would be like if the light level were that which we must suffer during the short period of the Queen's Speech. We know what it is like. We have felt it, and we must remember that.

My second anxiety relates to the unedifying spectacle in the Canadian House of Commons of Whips ushering people around the Chamber to sit behind the next member who is to speak.

Miss Fookes *rose in her place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. McWilliam (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order to move the closure on a point of order before——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is perfectly in order to move the closure at that time. I must put the Question.

The Question is, That the Question be now put. As many as are of that opinion say, "Aye", to the contrary, "No". I think the Ayes have it. The Ayes have it.

[Mr. Speaker]

The Question is,

That this House approves in principle the holding of an experiment in the public broadcasting of its proceedings by television; and believes that a Select Committee should be appointed to consider the implementation of such an experiment and to make recommendations.

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe that a number of right hon. and hon. Members are still ensconced in the Lobbies in the belief that they are voting on the procedural motion. Could the position be made clear before the doors are locked?

Mr. Speaker: I have put the Question. I distinctly heard the cry, "Division off," in respect of the procedural motion.

Mr. Dickens *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Many hon. Members were in the Lobbies when it was announced that there were no Tellers for the procedural motion. Therefore, many hon. Members are voting differently from their beliefs. Will you recall the Division, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members in the Chamber and outside clearly heard the cry, "Division off." I then put the Question on the main motion, and we are now voting on that.

Mr. Dickens *(seated and covered)*: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was in the Lobby and it was packed. Not one hon. Member heard the cry, "Division off." That is the gospel truth.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot be responsible for hon. Members who happen to be lurking in the wrong Lobby, or even in the right Lobby.

Mr. Faulds *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—*[Interruption.]* Order! When the Division was called off, many hon. Members in the Divison Lobby —I was one—did not hear that it had been called off. I am sorry to say that many of my colleagues are as dim-witted as I am.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch) *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I confirm what the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) and my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) said. I did not hear your calling the Division off and I suspect that there are 50 or 60 hon. Members in the same position.

Mr. Speaker: As there appears to be some confusion on this matter, I propose to suspend the House for five minutes while the Division Lobbies are cleared, when I will put the Question again.

10.10 pm
House suspended.

10.15 pm
On resuming—

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the House wants any further points of order. I have already suspended the sitting.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: I merely wanted to ask, Mr. Speaker, how what has just happened would be explained on television.

Question put. That the motion be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 275.

Division No. 8] **[10.15 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Anthony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchan, Norman
Buck, Sir Antony
Butler, Hon Adam
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cartwright, John
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Craigen, J. M.
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Cunningham, Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas, Dick
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evennett, David
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gorst, John
Gould, Bryan
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, W. W. *(Central Fife)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knowles, Michael

Knox, David
Lambie, David
Lamont, Norman
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Luce, Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McQuarrie, Albert
Madden, Max
Malone, Gerald
Martin, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
Newton, Tony
O'Neill, Martin
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Parry, Robert
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Radice, Giles
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soley, Clive
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wareing, Robert
Watson, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Meadowcroft and
Mr. Barry Henderson.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barnett, Guy
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Colvin, Michael
Conlan, Bernard
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crouch, David
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Ewing, Harry
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Faulds, Andrew
Favell, Anthony
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Forman, Nigel
Forrester, John
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garrett, W. E.
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gourlay, Harry
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hardy, Peter
Harris, David
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Haynes, Frank
Heddle, John
Heffer, Eric S.
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
John, Brynmor
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lamond, James
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loftnouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Park, George
Parris, Matthew
Patchett, Terry
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pavitt, Laurie

Pawsey, James
Pendry, Tom
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Weetch, Ken
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Welsh, Michael
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodall, Alec
Woodcock, Michael
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours
and Mr. Robert Atkins.

Question accordingly negatived.

Board and Lodging (Social Security Rules)

10.30 pm

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions (No. 2) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 11th November, be approved

I should remind the House briefly of the reasons for the action we took to make changes in the social security rules affecting board and lodging earlier this year. We were concerned about the extremely rapidly increasing expenditure in this area.

Between December 1982 and December 1984, expenditure on ordinary board and lodging rose from £166 million to £380 million, while for residential care and nursing homes, expenditure rose from £39 million to £190 million. Thus, the overall increase was from some £200 million to very nearly £600 million in only two years. To put it in perspective, that is equivalent to nearly £2 a week on the basic retirement pension.

We were concerned in particular about the growth in the numbers of young people who were moving into board and lodging. The number of claimants among young people of 25 and under rose from 23,000 in 1982 to 37,000 in 1983, and to an estimated 56,000 in 1984. We expected the figure to reach 85,000 in 1985. That is an increase of between 50 per cent. and 60 per cent. a year, far beyond anything which could be explained by any other factors.

We were also concerned about the extent to which those young people were effectively being drawn into a peculiar version of the unemployment trap, in that it was highly unlikely that they would be able to take a job and continue to pay for the accommodation that they were in—that is, if they were taken off supplementary benefit because they had found employment.

Another matter of concern was the wide variation of local limits throughout the country, not least for residential care and nursing homes, to a degree which it seemed almost impossible to explain by any rational calculation. We were not least concerned about the growing evidence of abuse of the system both by claimants and by landlords.

For those reasons we introduced regulations which took effect at the end of April 1985. For residential care and nursing homes, the essential feature was a national pattern of maximum amounts designed to reflect the different needs of different types of homes, but with what the Social Security Advisory Committee described as "generous" transitional protection for those for whom supplementary benefit was already meeting higher amounts.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): The hon. Gentleman referred to growing evidence. Was that evidence that came directly to his Department from officials, or was it evidence of newspaper stories?

Mr. Newton: It was evidence from a variety of quarters, including the study by the consultants Ernst and Whinney, of the board and lodging market in six or more areas around the country, a copy of which the hon. Gentleman will find in the Library if he cares to look for it.

For ordinary board and lodging, the essential feature was a system of board and lodging areas, consisting of DHSS local office areas grouped to take account of travel-to-work patterns, with a maximum board and lodging limit appropriate to each area. For young people under 26 there was a time limit, but with an extensive range of exemptions.

As the House will be aware, on 31 July, after Parliament had risen, the High Court decided an application for judicial review on the regulations. Mr. Justice Mann rejected the argument that we had failed properly to consult the Social Security Advisory Committee, and also the argument that the time limit of four weeks applied in the case of Simon Cotton was unreasonable. However, he found that the powers in the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 were insufficient to make regulations enabling Ministers to determine board and lodging areas and limits. In other words, the judge's view was that the regulations would have been in order if they had themselves contained the board and lodging areas and limits.

Mr. Justice Mann declined to make a formal order, on the Department's undertaking not to apply the time limits pending the making of new regulations or the outcome of any appeal. Immediate action was taken to put that undertaking into effect.

The House will also be aware that we decided to appeal, and that appeal is due to be heard by the Court of Appeal on 25 and 26 November—next week. At the same time, however, we felt it right to consider what the position would be in the light of the various possible outcomes of the appeal, and whether further action——

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): He will ask for other offences to be taken into account.

Mr. Newton: If the hon. Gentleman will wait, that is precisely the point that I shall come to.

We felt it right to consider what the position would be in the light of the various possible outcomes of the appeal, and whether further action was required to ensure that "sensible interim operation" for which Mr. Justice Mann had himself recognised the need. Since those appeal proceedings involve not only the Department's appeal on the technical point that I have described but a cross-appeal by Simon Cotton on the issue of alleged inadequate consultation, the possible outcomes of the proceedings cover a very wide range.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): Why did the Minister describe the appeal as having been decided on a technical point, when it was a major point for statutory interpretation?

Mr. Newton: I do not want to be involved in a legalistic or semantic argument. The point was very limited, concerning the fact that, had the board and lodging areas and time limits been in the regulations themselves, rather than set by the use of the Secretary of State's discretion, they would have been in order. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman objects to the use of the word "technical", I am more than happy to meet him by changing it to "limited". It is certainly a limited and narrow point.

Mr. John Morris: The judge found that the Secretary of State had no discretion; that is why the matter is not a

[Mr. John Morris]

technical matter. It was a matter of importance and it had to be enshrined in the statutory instrument itself. That is why the right hon. Gentleman and his Department lost.

Mr. Newton: I disagree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman—with some hesitation. The judge found that in the regulations, the Secretary of State could have taken discretion to deal with individual cases, but not with classes of cases, so that simply to say that the Secretary of State had no discretion is to convey the wrong flavour of what was said by Mr. Justice Mann.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Minister accept that this is a serious issue? When the original legislation was passed it was not envisaged that the regulations would be used in that way. Would it not have been better to use primary legislation to carry out the Government's policy rather than doing it by the back door? Will the Minister give a clear undertaking that implementation of any of the review of the whole of social security will be done by legislation, not by a series of statutory instruments introducing changes that were never envisaged when the original legislation was debated?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the sweeping undertaking that would change the practice of many successive Governments over a long period. I understand that he has written to the Leaders of both Houses with the point that he has just raised. No doubt they will reply to him in due course. With regard to the social security review, we have not sought to disguise our intention to have a significant primary Bill during the present Session—it was in the Queen's Speech.

There was a wide range of possible outcomes of the proceedings, especially in view of the cross-appeal. The more we considered the position, the clearer it became that the risk of confusion and of potential hardship to many claimants if the appeal were determined to any extent adversely to the Department's case without fresh regulations being in place were risks which any responsible Government could not knowingly have allowed.

If, for example, Mr. Cotton's cross-appeal were to succeed and all the earlier regulations were to fall, there could be an immediate reduction in the amounts of benefit payable in many areas, especially for those in residential care and nursing homes, a significant number of which, determined by previous locally determined limits, were substantially lower than those currently being paid. In Oldham, for example, the present residential care limit is anything up to £70 a week higher than the limit that was in force before April, and the nursing home limit is anything up to £60 a week higher than it was. A similar pattern would be true of many other areas.

In between that possibility and the other straightforward outcome, in which the Department succeeds in its case, lie a variety of conceivable positions in which some parts of the regulations stand while others fall. For example, there could be no limit on what could be paid; or we could have no secure basis for the increases in residential care and nursing home limits, which have been widely welcomed and which are due to come into effect as part of the general social security uprating next Monday. On almost any of those scenarios, our local offices would be faced with the need to make immediate re-assessments of the benefit of up to 200,000 claimants.

Therefore, we decided that the only proper course was to introduce regulations to prevent such confusion and uncertainty, to safeguard the increased maximum benefit rates for supplementary beneficiaries in residential care and nursing homes, and to provide a period of stability during which the outcome of the appeal proceedings, and of any further appeal by either side, could be properly considered. Having reached that decision, we introduced the draft regulations, which were laid before the House on 21 October. They were intended, as I believe everyone accepts, to establish a temporary or holding position until the end of May 1986, for the reasons that I have already given.

The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments drew the House's attention to those regulations, principally on grounds that I can best describe by quoting from its report:

"The Committee accepts that these amendments are intended to take account of the judgment in the Cotton case and of the resulting undertaking given by the Department to the court in that case. Nevertheless, the amendments (apart from Regulation 3) have only temporary effect, and subject to that temporary effect, the 1985 Regulations are re-promulgated. The effect of the Regulations is thus to re-promulgate inter alia the very provisions held in the Cotton case to be ultra vires."

It would be entirely pointless for me to do more than state that our position was that, in the event of the Department's appeal being unsuccessful, we would have introduced new regulations before the temporary provisions expired. But the House will agree with our decision that it would not be right to proceed with those regulations in view of the anxieties expressed by the Joint Committee.

Thus, we come to the further draft regulations that were laid before the House on 11 November and which we are debating tonight. They are designed to respond to the Joint Committee's concern, while at the same time meeting our objective of a period of stability.

Mr. John Morris: Can the Minister explain why, since the Joint Committee came to the view that the regulations were based on the dubious premise on which Mr. Justice Mann had held against the Government, they were introduced on substantially similar lines when that matter was still before the courts?

Mr. Newton: For the reasons that I have clearly stated. Obvious problems would arise in certain circumstances following the outcome of the appeal, and that would leave a state of total confusion about who should be paid what benefit in 200,000 cases around the country. Many vulnerable people in residential care and nursing homes could have found that, under existing law, their benefit entitlement would be substantially and dramatically cut. I will describe as simply as I can, in a complicated area, what the regulations do.

First, the financial limits applying to board and lodging areas and the time limits applying to some younger claimants, are effectively incorporated by reference in the regulations themselves.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I fully support the regulations and the intention behind them. Did the Minister consider changing some of the board and lodging limits from the first regulations to the new ones in the light of some of the inconsistencies that have been pointed out? In particular, is he aware of the special problem in Southend in relation to the rate for Peterborough?

Mr. Newton: I am conscious of the representations that my hon. Friend made. We considered almost every aspect

of these in deciding what regulations to bring before the House. We concluded that, in the circumstances that I have sought to describe, and against the background that in any case we have undertaken to carry out early next year a thorough review of all the limits in these provisions, it would not be right now to make piecemeal changes of the kind my hon. Friend has pressed upon me.

Secondly, however, the time limits for some younger claimants apply at the outset only to new claimants—that is to say, to those not being paid as boarders at the time the regulations take effect. They would not apply to existing claimants until 28 July 1986, a date we have chosen to coincide with next year's social security uprating. Thirdly, they re-enact all the categories of exemption from the time limits contained in the original regulations. Thus, the time limits do not apply, for example, to young people in hostels, to those with children, to those who are disabled, to those who have recently been in care, or to several other categories.

Fourthly, they provide a power to exempt young people from the time limits in any individual case where either they or their partner would otherwise suffer exceptional hardship. This replaces the previous provision, which was, of course, one of those called into question by the judgment in the Cotton case, to establish by the use of discretion additional classes of exemption as distinct from exemptions in individual cases.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could help about two related matters about the Secretary of State's discretion. Does a person have the right to make the Secretary of State exercise that discretion? Does a person have the right to ask the Secretary of State to consider whether there is exceptional hardship? If there were circumstances in which the Secretary of State was satisfied that a person was genuinely attempting to seek work and not abuse the regulations, would that fit within the category of exceptional hardship?

Mr. Newton: The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is that, clearly, a claimant could discuss his circumstances with the local office to which he applied for benefit in the first place, and draw attention to that which he considered to be exceptional hardship. The arrangement we have made will allow that matter to be referred by the local office to headquarters. That is to enable the exercise of the discretion to be operated consistently throughout the country, and a team of officers at headquarters will be particularly concerned with that work.

On the second point, it is not for me to make off-the-cuff judgments about what would or would not constitute exceptional hardship in a particular case. Given that the framework of the regulations, including the two, four and eight-week limits, was specifically designed to give what we felt was a reasonable time for young people to seek work in particular areas, simply the fact that someone was seeking work would not be taken automatically as a circumstance of exceptional hardship.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): When this point was put to them earlier in the year by the Social Security Advisory Committee the Government replied to the possibility of discretion being incorporated in the regulations in confident vein. In Cmnd. 9467 they said: "discretion . . . would be impossible to administer properly and fairly, and would be open to easy manipulation." Why was it wrong then but right now?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will understand that there have been some major changes such as have been mentioned and commented on throughout the summer arising from legal proceedings. Given that, as a result of the Cotton judgment, we have, at least for the time being, the power that we sought to create additional exemption classes to meet the need for flexibility, we felt it right to reconsider the possibilities of individual discretion and to do everything in our power to incorporate the flexibility that we believe is required. We have now found that we shall be able to operate by means of the provision that I have described.

Mr. Field: Perhaps other hon. Members, like the Minister, have failed to grasp the point. The Government said clearly that discretion would be impossible to administer. They did not qualify the statement. They did not say that they were considering a narrower canvas. They clearly rejected the Social Security Advisory Committee's proposal for discretion, saying that it was impossible. The Minister has a duty to the House to say why it was wrong then and why it is right now, beyond what he has already said.

Mr. Newton: I cannot go a great deal beyond the answer that I have already given, except to say that, as we conceived the suggestion then, the discretion would be operated purely locally, just as the previous setting of local limits was operated by adjudication officers at local level. We felt that that system had not produced a fair and defensible system of limits around the country. That led us to attempt to set limits by the national means that I have described and to feel that the system would not be satisfactory for the type of discretion that the hon. Gentleman is talking about. We have re-examined the matter in the past few months and decided that it would be right to develop a system at headquarters for operating discretion. We believe that, by that means, we can overcome the objections that we saw earlier to the operation that was expected to be local.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I am sure that the House is most grateful to my hon. Friend for the careful way in which he is explaining an extremely complicated matter. Is there anything in the proposed changes which will give comfort to parents such as two constituents who came to see me recently? They were in great distress because their young daughter of 17 has got into bad company. She was able to leave home, as her father said, "through the taxes I pay", and thus be in much greater danger than if she had stayed at home.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has described clearly one type of case that we intend to tackle by the earlier regulations and these—the young person who ought not to be able to leave home at the drop of a hat and pick up large sums of taxpayers' money. [HON. MEMBERS: "Disgraceful."] If Opposition Members on the Front Bench think that that is disgraceful, they are demonstrating the irresponsibility with which they approach the subject.

Mr. Dobson: What help will the regulations be to those young people whose relations with their parents are so poor that they cannot possibly stay with them?

Mr. Newton: The exemption categories are designed precisely to cater for young people in that position.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): What is the maximum sum that a teenager in London could receive, including laundry allowance and so on, after the regulations come into force? After all the changes and attempted changes, I believe that it is still possible for a teenager to receive about £100 per week.

Will my hon. Friend also explain why the amount that can be received in my constituency is £5 or £10 less than in the neighbouring constituency of Norfolk, South?

Mr. Newton: On the second point, as I have said on previous occasions, we set the limits for the individual board and lodging areas taking into account the limits that had been set locally under the previous system and such other information as was available. In the early part of next year we shall be reviewing those limits, as I explained to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor), and we shall be prepared to consider points of that kind at that time.

On the first point, it is impossible without undue complexity to speculate on the maximum benefit that a claimant might receive, taking into account all possible additional elements of supplementary benefit, but the maximum normal allowance for a young person in board and lodgings in London at present would be £79·25. That means that the young person would have to earn £115 a week to achieve the same residual amount to spend on board and lodging. If my hon. Friend regards that as unsatisfactory, I remind him that previously the highest local limit in London was £109, which meant that a young person would have had to earn £180 per week to meet the same board and lodging charges out of earned income—roughly the same as the average adult male wage and far more than the average earnings of young people or of adults in unskilled jobs. That is as good an illustration as any of the appalling unemployment trap into which we are allowing many of these young people to fall.

Mr. Howell: That is precisely my point. Just the other day a lady came to my surgery who had only £28.05 to live on, although her rent and rates, admittedly, were being paid. What on earth are we doing paying £80 or more to young people who deliberately make themselves homeless?

Mr. Newton: For the moment, I will take comfort in the obvious support for the attempts that we are making to tackle the problems about which my hon. Friend is concerned. That is the basis of the regulations.

For residential care and nursing homes the regulations set out the same structure and pattern of limits as the original regulations, varying according to the type of home and the differing needs of the people for whom the homes cater, but they also do two other things to which I should draw attention.

First, the regulations provide clearly and directly for the proposed increases in residential care and nursing home limits which I announced in July and which are intended to take effect from next Monday. This means an increase of £10 per week in all residential care limits, so the range will be £120 to £180 instead of £110 to £170. For nursing homes, the increase is £31·40 per week, so the range will be £170 to £230 instead of £138·60 to £198·60.

That has been welcomed by all hon. Members. The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) ironically asked me what steps I proposed to take to safeguard those increases, although he complained at the same time about the fact that I was introducing these regulations. We are taking powers—again to be exercised on an individual basis where there would otherwise be exceptional hardship—to give the benefit of transitional protection to those who were in residential care or nursing homes last April but who have come on to supplementary benefit only since then. Many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have been concerned about that point. I hope that they will welcome the action that the Government have taken.

Although the regulations are permanent, I should make it clear that this in no way detracts from what I said earlier about the reasons for bringing them forward at this stage, or from the commitments we have made to a review in the early part of next year, taking account, among other things, of the work now being done for us by consultants on residential and nursing care.

I should also make it clear that we continue to believe that it would be desirable to have greater flexibility than these regulations allow — for example, to change the board and lodging areas or to introduce new exemption categories — and that we would wish to consider restoring this, should the Department's appeal in the Cotton case succeed.

Our basic objective remains, as it has been throughout, to ensure proper provision for those who are in need while preventing exploitation by those who are not, and it is in that spirit that I commend the regulations to the House.

11.1 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): As the Minister for Social Security said, this is the third attempt by the Government to force through these infamous board and lodging regulations. The original regulations were declared illegal in July as a result of the Cotton case. The second set of regulations were withdrawn in October, following unprecedented criticism by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. Its report states:

"The Committee sympathise with the Department's difficulties, but it seems to the Committee that to make regulations knowing that there is a doubt about their vires is a very questionable procedure. The Department were unable to point to any precedent for proceeding in that way and the Committee do not know of any. Furthermore, the Committee are not persuaded that the making of these regulations in advance of a decision of the Court of Appeal is necessary, given that Mr. Justice Mann left the way open for the Department to maintain the status quo either pending an appeal or pending the making of new regulations."

Despite that unprecedented slapdown, the Government are introducing a third set of regulations. Quite apart from the substance of these regulations, to which I shall return, the procedure which the Secretary of State is adopting is highly questionable, if not actually improper.

An appeal regarding the original regulations is pending. It relates to the referral of the regulations to the Government's social security advisory committee. The proposed regulations, on the other hand, have not been referred to the social security advisory committee,

"since it appears to the Secretary of State that by reason of urgency it is inexpedient to do so."

Any state of urgency is entirely of the Secretary of State's own making. It is highly dubious for the Secretary of State to act ultra vires and then to use the consequential delay as the ground upon which not to follow the normal procedure.

This is not a technical point. The Government are required under the terms of the Social Security Act to consult the social security advisory committee, but they

have not done so. There can be no possible excuse for failing to do so, because three and a half months have elapsed since the hearing of the Cotton case in July.

Secondly, it is all the more remarkable that the Government are trying to rush this third set of regulations through Parliament when the Department of Health and Social Security's application to the Court of Appeal is to be heard very soon—the Minister said in five days' time. At the very least, it is presumptuous towards the Court of Appeal.

The Government could introduce the regulations and drop the appeal but they have not done so. Having launched an appeal, I do not accept that it is appropriate to pre-empt the result of the appeal by further regulations. That is exactly what the Government are doing and it displays a very high-handed approach. It is all the more high-handed when the current position is not a cause for immediate concern, either for the Department or for the claimants.

The earlier regulations are still in force. They were not struck down by the court, and claimants are protected by the undertaking given by the DHSS to the court. There is simply no urgent reason why that position cannot continue, having continued for at least three and a half months, until after the Court of Appeal's decision in five days' time.

Mr. Newton: I hope the hon. Gentleman appreciates that, among other things, the 1985 regulations revoked large parts of the previous regulations, under which limits were operated. Will he consider the possibility, which we must consider, that some parts of the 1985 regulations are judged to fall, but not that part which revoked the 1983 regulations? To all intents and purposes there is, therefore, no effective regime governing board and lodging payments.

Mr. Meacher: Our position is that that would be a considerable advantage, because there is no need for regulations. There are already adequate powers in the hands of the Secretary of State to deal with any allegations of fraud in respect of persons in board and lodgings. The powers are wholly gratuitous and should be rescinded.

It is astonishing and tragic that the Government should be rushing ahead so inflexibly with regulations which are unnecessary, and which have caused, and will continue to cause, several suicides—I certainly know of at least half a dozen—and real misery for tens of thousands of young people. The regulations will penalise these young people for failing to obtain what everyone outside the Government knows it is virtually impossible for them to obtain, that is a job within eight weeks, when unemployment today for people under the age of 25 averages 21 per cent., or alternative accommodation, when the house building programme under the Government has been decimated, and alternative houses or flats for young people are simply not available.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): The hon. Gentleman made the serious allegation that these regulations had caused suicides. Does he have any direct evidence of that? Has that been found in a court? Does he have any evidence that the incidence of suicide has increased as a result of the regulations?

Mr. Meacher: I shall cite a number of cases in a moment; but as the matter has been raised, I shall cite a case from a report by the Association of Chief Officers of Probation. The report states:

"In Northumberland, a mentally disturbed, former client of the Probation Service received notice of time expiry, could not find alternative accommodation, committed suicide."

It is possible, legalistically, to say that it cannot be proven that that was the sole cause, but certainly there is strong evidence to suggest that that was the cause. *[Interruption.]* I can provide other examples.

In Luton, a 22-year-old man committed suicide after receiving notice of the implementation of the DHSS regulations. In the case of a broken family in Essex, a 23-year-old man who was trying to be reconciled with his wife obtained lodging near her home, but he was forced to move on because of the suspension of allowance under the time limitation. Can Conservative Members countenance such a price being paid for the regulations?

Mr. Butterfill *rose*—

Mr. Meacher: This is a short debate, I have more to say and, therefore, I shall not give way again.

The Government's main justification throughout has been that the board and lodging budget has been escalating out of control, but individual charges have not been increasing rapidly. I hope that the Minister takes it on board that the percentage increase in the average board and lodging charge for 1984 was the lowest for five years. The increasing numbers of people living on board and lodging has caused the budget to grow. Is that a justification for introducing maximum allowances, which simply have the effect of making people homeless?

More recently, the Secretary of State has tried to imply that the regulations are designed to check fraud, but there is a major flaw in that argument. The private landlord and hotelier, not the claimant, benefit from increased board and lodging allowances. All that the claimant receives is a mere £9·70 per week personal allowance, plus fixed amounts for meals. The lodging allowance and relevant allowance for board have to be handed over by the claimant to the landlord.

If there is as much fraud as is claimed, why have only 30 people been prosecuted in the King's Cross area, when the Government claim that 600 out of 1,200 claimants investigated there have been defrauding the system? I shall be glad to give way to the Secretary of State if he wishes to answer that. He talks about fraud, but only one in 20 of those who are said to defraud the system have been prosecuted.

It is because the justifications do not wash that the Opposition unreservedly condemn these gratuitously harsh and unfair regulations. We call for them to be rescinded.

The exemption system which the Government were forced to introduce in the light of the previous outcry against the measure does not provide adequate protection for the most vulnerable. This is partly because the responsibility for identifying the exempt lies with claimants and not with the DHSS, and because many claimants within the exempt categories who have applied for exemption have been turned down by the DHSS and their allowances cut.

I can list examples. An 18-year-old girl with chronic asthma was not treated as exempt. She had severe attacks. Her landlady had to assist. The DHSS would not accept that she was chronically sick and therefore exempt.

[Mr. Meacher]

Another 18-year-old girl was physically thrown out of her home by her mother two years ago. Some hon. Members talk about people walking out of their homes without provocation. That rarely happens. More often people just cannot stay at home. In the case that I described the girl's stepfather was a violent drunk and her mother was mentally ill. The DHSS refused to concede that she had left home because of physical or moral danger.

Another case involves a youth aged 20 who had twice been put in hospital because of his stepfather's violence. He was living in board and lodging accommodation, but, because he was over 19, family violence was not a ground for exemption and his benefit was cut. Is that an example of the exempt limit being properly exercised?

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): A number of parents have written to me in distress informing me that their schoolgirl daughters have left home to live with their boyfriends in Morecambe and are being paid for by the DHSS

Mr. Meacher: The phrase "being paid for by the DHSS" is an extravagant distortion. If hon. Members had to experience the standards of living imposed by the cuts, they would not use that phrase. If the Lady writes to me about individual cases, I shall be pleased to reply.

The awful truth about the regulations is that, far from increasing the jobs take-up, which was their ostensible purpose, they have had a different and disastrous effect. They have curtailed severely the amount of board and lodging accommodation available.

The Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless has found that in central London there are now only about 25 bed and breakfast hostels within the price limit laid down by the DHSS in the areas covered by the four central DHSS offices. Before the new limits there were 200—eight times the amount of hostel accommodation. So embarrassed is the DHSS that it has refused to publish a list of accommodation within the price limit.

Many hoteliers have taken other and more profitable sorts of trade, leaving only those places of such poor standard that no one with any choice would choose to live there. The hoteliers remaining in the trade keep up profit margins by flouting public health laws and cramming in people. That is the effect of the regulations. I ask the Minister whether that is what the Government intended. If not—and I believe that they did not intend that—how can they justify pressing on regardless with the regulations?

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Will my hon. Friend take on board the point that another effect of the regulations is the disfranchisement of many thousands of young people who will not be able to register their votes? Will he advise them that by 10 October next they should try to obtain board and lodgings in Finchley?

Mr. Meacher: That is admirable advice. There are 85,000 people whom the regulations have made into nomads. I hope that for the purpose of registering for what will probably be the date of the next general election, those people will find an opportunity to be in the constituency of Finchley so that they can effectively show the Prime Minister what they feel about the regulations.

I come to the part of the regulations mentioned by the Minister that has the more welcome effect of raising the limit for elderly persons in residential and nursing homes. Even here there is a shortfall in the new ceiling which is below the market reality. It is the relationship with the cost of accommodation that is relevant and that is having disastrous consequences. I cite one case put to me by the British Association of Social Workers. An elderly, physically handicapped lady living in Enfield entered a private residential home three or four years ago. She used the capital from selling her house to pay the £180 per week rent. At that time she was assured by both the DHSS and the social services department that when her capital was depleted she would be eligible for supplementary benefit, and that her future would be secure. By July of this year her capital had been reduced to £3,000 and she applied for supplementary benefit. The DHSS informed her that she would be entitled only to the statutory limit of £110 per week under the new regulations, and that she would have to make up the shortfall from her capital. That she has done since July, but her small sum of money is rapidly running out.

Mr. Newton: I realise that the hon. Gentleman is in the middle of describing a particular case, but to save him the trouble of completing it I make the point that it is exactly that sort of case that is the object of one of the new provisions that I described in my speech.

Mr. Meacher: When the Minister talks about new provisions, I do not know whether he is talking about exceptional hardship or transitional protection. That elderly lady has already attempted to kill herself by taking an overdose of drugs. Her family wrote to the Secretary of State some considerable time ago, but has received no reply.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): And she voted Tory.

Mr. Meacher: Perhaps the Secretary of State would care to go through his correspondence and help that elderly lady.

Another problem is causing real anxiety to the elderly, but the Government have not provided an answer tonight. It arises with the elderly and disabled who are placed with families in the community and cared for on a long-term basis. Under present arrangements, the DHSS contributes the maximum sum allowed for such placements, which is £70 a week, and that is then topped up by the adult care scheme to meet the costs of carers. The present regulations provide transitional protection for such claimants only—this is relevant to the point which the Minister has just made—until April 1986. After that date, the residential homes limit will apply to such placements and the board and lodging regulations will preclude the topping up of payments to elderly people in this type of accommodation. The Minister said that the transitional protection was designed to assist the kinds of cases that I have mentioned. He might care to say what will happen in less than a year from now, because many of these elderly people will live beyond then, and this is causing immense anxiety.

It is absurd that such elderly and dependent people will in future have to be cared for in local authority residential homes when the cost of such a home is £196 a week, as opposed to the topping-up cost under the adult care placement scheme of only £14·87.

These regulations will not achieve the purpose ostensibly claimed for them. They are not intended, let alone expected, to achieve that aim. They are, in fact, yet

another element, and a particularly harsh and vindictive one, of the Government's general policy of cutting benefits for some of the most vulnerable members of society in order to fund increased tax reliefs for the already privileged. It is a philosophy which we reject and abhor, one which, when we come to power, we shall wholeheartedly reverse.

11.22 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I am glad to support the Government in tonight's endeavours. This set of regulations can be rated better than the last lot on several grounds. First, they protect the increase given to residential care homes, particularly nursing homes, and I know that that will be greatly welcomed. At last, some of the figures are realistic, and I know that the Minister is examining the matter with consultants to see exactly how the limits can be set in future. One waits in vain to hear spokesmen on the Opposition Front Bench welcoming some of the increases, which will solve some of the problems that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) outlined.

Secondly, the regulations give the Secretary of State discretion in cases of hardship. I should have thought that would answer all the worries of Opposition Members about borderline cases. It will require a realistic and responsive system. I wonder whether my right hon. and hon. Friends quite realise what they are letting themselves in for if we are to have a 24-hour system. I believe that it is right in principle that there should be some discretion and that it should lie with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury) *rose——*

Mrs. Currie: I will not give way, because there is little time for the debate and other hon. Members want to speak.

Thirdly, the categories to be helped are widened. I counted about 30 categories outlined by Mr. Justice Mann, and we have now added to those. The list includes all the people we want to help, such as the pregnant, the mentally handicapped, the mentally ill, the disabled, students on vacation living in their normal term-time accommodation and people under 19 with no parents or guardians, and all the others.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West talked about people who had committed, or were alleged to have committed, suicide—*[Interruption.]* They did not do it because of the DHSS. In all the cases that have been put to us, they did it because they were suffering from mental illness; and those who are busy writing reports about them, such as SHAC, Shelter and all the other organisations, would have been better advised to look after those people rather sooner, before they reached that state. I say that particularly to social workers and probation officers, who should have been looking after them much better.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that it was curious of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) not to mention whether those people had previously attempted suicide, before the regulations were introduced?

Mrs. Currie: There has been a campaign to try to brand the Government as evil ogres doing down poor and handicapped people — *[Interruption.]* For such a campaign to convince me, I should need some detailed figures and names and addresses. We have not been given any of those. Whereas I should need verifiable evidence, what we have had in all the campaigns—including the *Derby Evening Telegraph*, just as we had tonight from the hon. Member for Oldham, West—has been a handful of anecdotes and some unverifiable statements: what used to be called no names, no pack drill. I should want to see some names and detailed case histories before I could be satisfied.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Does the hon. Lady recall that when the regulations were first introduced, that is exactly what the Social Security Advisory Council said about the Government's evidence?

Mrs. Currie: I recall also that the Derby office of the DHSS, which covers the hon. Lady's constituency as well as much of mine, told me that in March, before the regulations were changed, there were 800 board and lodging claimants in Derby at 200 addresses. It was convinced that there was widespread fraud and it did not have the staff to make the necessary checks.

If anyone from the Treasury is listening, I believe that cutting DHSS staff in local offices costs public money and that the cuts should not take place.

I have not had to take up the case of a single constituent who can be shown to have lost through the new regulations or to have been placed in one of the exempt categories and caused to suffer real injustice. I have offered to do so, and no one has come forward. It would seem that there is not one such case in my constituency.

Any system of social security has to try to satisfy those who are in real need and to combat abuse. I shall quote the answer that was given by my hon. Friend the Minister on 29 October [illegible]. He stated:

> "A survey of . . . claimants . . . in the south-east"—

it was a survey of 2,350 claimants under 26—

> "showed 20 per cent. were exempt".

They were within the exemptions then set out, which are about to be widened. He continued:

> "A further 35 per cent. remained in the same accommodation, mainly at the non-householder rate of benefit. 15 per cent. moved to other accommodation (less than 2 per cent. of these as boarders). 25 per cent. ceased to claim supplementary benefit altogether."—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. *441*.]

It appears that a fair number of them disappear. The figures in other areas produce a roughly comparable picture.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West knows all about these figures, for it was he who tabled the question which produced the answer from which I have quoted. If he wants to be Secretary of State for Social Services, he will have to find some way of combating such abuse. He cannot and should not try to deny that there is abuse. We must find ways of combating abuse in any system that we introduce, and a Labour Government would have to emulate this Government's example.

The Labour party has a bit of a nerve. If all the old people who are in residential care receiving the allowances, and even half the young people receiving board and lodging allowances, are in real need, I should expect to find from the figures even five to six years ago —they are all available—about 40,000 old people being cared for and about 100,000 younger people. I am taking account of demographic change and changes in the employment pattern of young people, for example. I have checked the figures. In 1978, 40,000 young people, not 100,000, were being helped by the Labour Government

[Mrs. Currie]

under the then regulations, and 7,000 old people, not the 40,000 that we would have expected. They spent all of £50 million on board and lodging allowances and a miserable £6 million on caring for old people in private residential care. Who are the misers? The misers are on the Opposition Benches. They spent all of £50 million, and last year this Government spent £570 million. I think that I am right in saying that this year we shall spend £700 million. The record of the Labour Government does not bear comparison with that of the present Government.

I have not yet congratulated my right hon. and hon. Friends on producing something that is legal—we do not know whether it is legal because the name of the game is "Find a loophole"—or I have not yet congratulated them on producing something that is simple, elegant and easy to understand along the lines demanded by the social security reviews. I am not sure whether the provisions can be so described. I am not certain that we have the definitive version before us. What is missing above all is a genuine system of assessment of need. My hon. Friend the Minister had been kind enough to allow me to put some suggestions to him on this matter.

I shall support the Government in the Division in the honest hope that they will produce a system that looks after those who are in need, not those who do not come into that category, and in the certain knowledge that no one else can produce such an earnest endeavour to that end.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I remind the House that this is a short debate. I appeal for extreme brevity.

11.30 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I do not follow either the style or the content of the speech of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), but I take up her last point. She said that she favours a system that helps those who are in need but does not help those who are not in need. I do not think that this system does help those in need. I should like to associate myself with the remarks of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). We shall vote against the regulations.

There are substantial legal difficulties. Our conclusion about the mess that ensued from the Cotton legal appeal and the subsequent legal difficulties is the same as that already pointed out by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). Any secondary legislation to introduce a fundamental and far-reaching change in policy does have extensive implications for the House. I was somewhat reassured by the Minister's tone, but I would be happier if he would make clear what the Government intend doing in the future. The Secretary of State's Green Paper is in train. A Social Security Bill will be introduced early in the next calendar year. I hope that in future the Government will eschew procedures such as this to save us from this difficulty.

If the proposals enshrined in this secondary legislation had been contained in primary legislation, hon. Members would have been able to ask the Secretary of State detailed questions, like those he was asked before. There are still some unclear matters. The DHSS has taken powers to introduce an exemption for exceptional hardship in cases referred to it by local adjudication officers. I assume that there can be no appeal. Does that mean that a claimant can appeal only by means of a process of judicial review: If so, we are on course for another series of charades to be played in the courts. Surely that is in the interest of no one.

I have looked carefully at the regulations, but I cannot work out the procedure for review. I understand that we shall have, not an annual recourse to uprating board and lodging payments, but a process of review. Does that mean that the Secretary of State will introduce secondary legislation to say that he is publishing a new booklet? We shall have one of these one and a half hour debates about whether the booklet should be produced, but we will not necessarily have the booklet in front of us. We shall be giving the Secretary of State the power to change the geographical areas or the time limits in a statutory instrument to be followed by a booklet published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. That is a terrible, hopelessly unsatisfactory way to proceed.

It is regrettable and inevitable that there will now be chaos—administrative and otherwise. DHSS staff in my area do an excellent job, but I do not understand how the Secretary of State can expect them to see new claimants for board and lodging payment and tell them that they will be back in the old system whereby they are subject to the two, four or eight week limit. I understand that existing board and lodging claimants will be covered until the operating period next year. If these measures are introduced forthwith, there will be a great deal of chaos.

The Minister has said that he will look again at the regulations. Is he talking about looking at them in detail and refining the cash and time limits and the geographical areas, or is he proposing to introduce a new system for dealing with the adjudication problem? If he is intending the latter action, he will receive a great deal of support from us. It may be pushing things a bit in terms of time, but the Minister has the opportunity in the Social Security Bill which is to be introduced next year to propose a new system which could replace the present hopelessly unsatisfactory one.

The Government's need to react in the way that they have done has not been proved to my satisfaction. I heard what the Minister said about the Ernst and Whinney report, and all the rest of it, but I think that the Department has acted largely on anecdotal evidence and press reports. I have seen nothing that satisfies me that the major changes introduced by the Government were necessary.

As the hon. Member for Oldham, West said, there has been an increase in the number of young people receiving board and lodging allowances, but the Government have not encouraged local authorities, through the Department of the Environment, to have a more flexible house letting policy for young people. That could have made a great deal of difference. I do not mean that the local authorities should build lots of new houses, but, with sensible rehabilitation and improvement grants, some single accommodation in some of our cities could be made available to our young people.

The furniture grants have been administered too inflexibly. It is regrettable that claimants must establish that there is no other suitable accommodation available locally before they can receive furniture grants. The Government could have done more about that matter.

Where in the regulations is there an attempt to tackle the problem of abuse by landlords? What have the Government done to tackle the board and lodging cartels which the Minister mentioned, the pricing policies and the

conditions in which some of the young people live? If they had done something, they would have been seen to be more even handed, and the Minister might have received more support for his proposals. The Government have not taken the necessary action, and I therefore do not think that the proposals deserve support. The consequences are there for all to see. The proposals have a harmful effect on young people's employment prospects because of the time that they have available to look for jobs.

The vulnerable will not be properly protected, even with the new exceptional hardship exemptions, because the onus of proving exceptional hardship is on the claimant. There is a myriad of regulations to look through, yet the onus is on the claimant to try to work out the complicated exemption categories. The protection available is not enough to satisfy me that the vulnerable will not be at risk.

The right of appeal will be vitiated in practice, because if the claimant has only, two, four or eight weeks in which to appeal, by the time the appeal is heard the landlord will have hoi'd the claimant out of the door. There will not be time to prosecute the appeal sensibly. There should be a procedure to stop the time limit clock from running when the claimant appeals.

The fact that the regulations are prejudicial to young people's voting rights has been mentioned. They are also prejudicial to their education and training opportunities.

Does the Minister believe it to be right that some young people in this position should have to attribute their meal and personal allowances to pay their boarding charges? If we can establish that that is happening, will the Minister take a serious view of the practice, or is he prepared to accept it as a consequence of the regulations? If he is, that is monstrously unfair. There is evidence that that is happening.

I ask the Minister to consider the failure to increase the limits, which are damaging. I think that he has had correspondence from the Scottish Council for the Single Homeless about them. Many people were expecting board and lodging increases in the normal uprating of benefits in the annual review. It has not happened, and that has put a lot of budgetary plans out of joint. Will the Minister consider again the failure to increase the allowances for meals? The £1 limit for breakfast and the £1.55 limit for lunch and dinner are penal. Those have been the limits for some time.

I could continue but in view of the constraint on time, I shall not do so. We cannot support the regulations. I urge the Minister to consider the problems again and to bring forward a new system in the social security legislation next year.

11.40 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Time is very short, so I shall briefly put only three points to my hon. Friend. Perhaps I should start by saying that I am proud to have been a member of the board of management of Shelter since 1982, although that means that from time to time I see things differently from some of my hon. Friends. As I said in the Chamber when we first debated the regulations, I support action to crack down on fraud, and we should all be able to support that.

I ask my hon. Friend to consider the administrative point of how the system operates. A person under 26 will receive a notice telling him that his benefit is to be cut, and with it will come an exemption form. Some people have not realised that they can claim exemption, and one or two tragedies have occurred. May I suggest a slight change in the system? The Department should initially notify the person that the period of benefit is coming to an end and should send with that notification an exemption claim form. If and when the Department determines that the person is not eligible, he should then be advised that the grant will be terminated. That might remove some problems.

As to the quality and standard of the buildings we are talking about, there are enough independent reports to show that in the main they are disgusting, ghastly and horrible. I hope my hon. Friend will continue to bring pressure on, I assume, the Secretary of State for the Environment to introduce a system of registration of the buildings. It is long past the time when any of us should be happy about conditions in so many of the properties. Nothing will happen unless we show the political will to do something about them.

Like all my hon. Friends, I want as many young people as possible to remain within the family environment for as long as they can. Some of them do not, for reasons which we have heard in the debate. We already know why some young people leave home. We have a responsibility to find ways to cope with those young people. The treatment of young people without a friendly home to return to is very bad. Would it be possible to have an inter-departmental review involving the Home Office, the Department of the Environment and the DHSS to try to find ways to assist young homeless people? Many of them dare not return to their parents or step-parents. If something were done about that, we would have started to tackle the underlying problem which essentially involves housing for the homeless rather than benefit.

11.43 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I want to speak briefly about Simon Cotton, because he is a constituent of mine. Had he not been successful in taking the Government to court, he would not now be one of my constituents, because he would have been moved on under the rules.

Although still a young person, Simon has had a serious heart complaint and has undergone major heart surgery. He has lived for most of his life in children's homes or in foster homes. He is now living with an ex-employee of one of the children's homes in which he grew up. Even under the new regulations, that person would not be exempt. Therefore, as well as considering some of the grander accusations about those who are abusing the social security system, the House should think about some real people.

I am not making a claim from the Opposition that there is no abuse. I hope that nobody in the Opposition puts forward that case. However, we are saying that we object strongly to the way in which abuse is being tackled. If claimants are abusing the system, it is proper that they should be brought before the courts. It is noticeable that, with all the charges of abuse over recent debates, few claimants seem to have appeared in court.

Much more serious than the abuse by some claimants is that by landlords. The Opposition object to trying to prevent that abuse by penalising claimants, some guilty, some not. That is an unsound way to try to tackle a considerable increase in public expenditure, as the Minister said. My guess is that quite a few of those claims were wrongly made, not so much by claimants as by the landlords upon whom they are dependent.

[Mr. Frank Field]

Secondly, no one in the Opposition wishes to support a social security system that prevents or discourages people from working; but we make a plea, at a time of massive unemployment, for a genuine test of whether a person wishes to work. Twenty years ago, the rules were clear. The Ministry of Labour was closely linked with social security payments, and people who claimed benefits could have their claim tested by being presented with a job opportunity. *[Interruption.]* The previous Government and this Government have been unwise to try to divide the workings of the Department of Employment from the payment of benefits. Many claimants—*[Interruption.]*—would be encouraged if the Department of Employment——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Could you not persuade the hon. Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Crawley (Mr. Soames) who are standing below the Gangway, to keep more quiet? It is distressing that they appear to be satisfied on the basis of the generous board and lodging allowance for Members for Parliament, when we are considering much smaller sums. It is a little unfortunate that they should behave in that way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have no doubt that hon. Members have heard the hon. Gentleman. I hope that they will keep reasonably quiet.

Mr. Field: I am grateful for the intervention. One hon. Member said that he wished to be sent for an interview by the Department of Employment. No doubt that will happen soon.

I should like to turn from fantasy to the real world. I am sorry that I did not speak after the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I was sent a copy of the Derby Diocesan Council for Social Responsibility's report on how the board and lodging regulations are operated in her area. The main points were as follows. First, the report expresses surprise that the Government, who believe in encouraging the private market and that private landlordism should be extended should be so horrified when that occurs. In the council's area, which the hon. Lady's constituency covers, that is precisely what has happened with the small landlord and landlady.

Secondly, the report refers to the extent of abuse. The council reckons that abuse is operating in its area, but by and large it is being done by those who are operating large establishments or who own several establishments. The council list the ways in which the bigger landlords are providing bogus accommodation so that claimants can claim allowances.

Thirdly, the report asks whether, in an area where there has been a massive increase in public expenditure and where the Government are anxious to create real jobs, it would not be sensible to try to control the increase in public expenditure by employing a few more people to build a register of decent lodgings, so that the claimants and the taxpayers knew that they were getting a good deal.

Lastly, the report describes some of those who are affected by the rules and regulations. I emphasise the point that the report, by its nature, does not pick up those who abuse the system. They are not foolish enough to go along and say, "This is how we do it." They are excluded from the report, but others are affected by the regulations.

Mr. Rooker: Why did not the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) quote that report?

Mr. Field: I do not know. I am trying to quote the report and finish my speech.

Mrs. Currie: I have seen the report, and I am glad to hear the hon. Gentleman confirm much of what I said: that there is widespread abuse. I do not care who is committing it; it is wrong. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is difficult to discover genuine cases? I repeat that I asked for the details, names and addresses of constituents badly affected, and I have received nothing.

Mr. Field: I would have given the hon. Lady the benefit of the doubt by assuming that she had not seen the report. It is extraordinary that she did not quote it, as I have done.

I end by giving three examples—perhaps they are the hon. Lady's constituents — of real cases. Some hon. Members believe that many claimants are street-wise people who know how to rig the social security system, but the report states:

"Many of those interviewed had severe literacy and numeracy problems, and rather than being 'street-wise' they came over as being rather slow and inadequate in their ability to cope with the demands of everyday life without some support."

The report also describes a young girl:

"She was ill with worry, having been forced to move out under the original ruling, and the prospect of having to move again, consequently she was being treated for depression. She commented: 'I would do the same as I did before, sell my body for the money to eat.'"

Mrs. Currie: What is her name?

Mr. Field: If the hon. Lady is doubting the Bishop of Derby, she is very foolish indeed.

The third example is of a lad from Derby who intentionally broke a shop window in the hope of getting a probation order, which would make him exempt from the time restrictions. That strategy was successful.

The House decision's tonight will affect many claimants similar to those mentioned in that report. Many hon. Members would say that they would not be so foolish as to behave as some of the claimants whom I have described, but, of course, we are not making the rules and regulations for us. If we were, we would not pass them tonight.

11·53 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister will not be deflected from his determination to introduce some sense into the board and lodging allowances for the able-bodied young. I say that for three good reasons. First, the allowances are an insult to the rest of the population. Many low-paid people cannot hope to live in circumstances similar to those enjoyed by those who benefit from the board and lodging allowances. Certainly in my constituency, they live in comfortable circumstances. Secondly, the regulations are an insult to the unemployed. An unemployed single person on supplementary benefit receives £27·50 a week, yet someone in receipt of board and lodging allowance receives £29·40 only for his food.

The second reason, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) said, is that the allowances lead to the breaking up of families. A lady constituent came into my surgery recently and told me of her 16-year-old girl, who was being encouraged to leave

home to live with a young man whom the mother suspects of dabbling in drugs. She said: "Mr. Favell, the state is encouraging this young girl, who needs me and my family, to move out and live in those circumstances. What hope is there for my daughter and what is the state going to do about it?" I am glad to hear that my hon. Friend is proposing to do something about it.

These allowances are bad for young people, because it is not good for them to be tied to the apron strings of social security. With allowances of this kind, there is little prospect of them leaving board and lodging if they are offered a job. In my constituency, somebody on board and lodging receives £55 plus another £9-odd for pocket money. There is no point in him going on a community or youth training programme, because he woud lose his supplementary benefit. There is no incentive to work or train or to find a job.

11.54 pm

Mr. Newton: In the time available, I shall not be able to reply to all the points made by hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) used a phrase that reflects the exaggerated way in which he has consistently approached this problem. He took the number, which we originally estimated, of young people under the age of 26 likely to be in board and lodging this year—85,000. I made a note of the phrase that he used. He referred to 85,000 nomads roaming the country. On 29 October I gave the hon. Gentleman some of the results of our careful monitoring of the introduction of the regulations while the time limits were still operating. I shall put those figures on record.

A survey of 2,350 claimants in an area covering a large part of south-east England showed that 20 per cent. were exempt from the time limits. Later evidence suggests that is an understatement of the position. A further 35 per cent. remained in the same accommodation, mainly at the non-householder rate of benefit—lower than the board and lodging rate. They stayed in the same place. The survey shows that 15 per cent. moved to other accommodation —less than 2 per cent. of them as boarders. In other words, they found accommodation with family or friends or in rented accommodation where housing benefit applied. Alongside the 35 per cent. who stayed in the same accommodation, at tens of pounds a week less benefit, 25 per cent. ceased to claim supplementary benefit, some because their unempolyment benefit was higher than their then entitlement to supplementary benefit.

In a situation when over half the claimants in a large part of the country in a substantial survey either stayed put at much lower rates of benefit or simply disappeared from the books, questions about the validity of many of these payments must be raised. That evidence has been strengthened by work carried out at the Euston local office which suggested that nearly half of the claimants——

Mrs. Beckett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: No.

The Euston office found that nearly half of the claimants were not staying at the addresses they had notified to the DHSS.

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady says that I am misleading the House.

Mrs. Beckett: If the Minister is not misleading the House, I should be pleased to hear his explanation. The figures he quoted were given between April and July 1985. Londoners did not have to move on until August.

Mr. Newton: Whatever may have happened as regards Londoners, those figures cover a large part of the south eastern part of the country, and the time limits were operating. They correspond with the figures in Euston. It is precisely because of that evidence that we are taking vigorous further action against fraud. I hope that when we do, we shall have more support than we had at the time of Operation Major in Oxford — we prosecuted both claimants and landlords — when the Opposition spent months making a fuss about what had happened.

I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 336, Noes 198.

Division No. 9] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butcher, John
Butler, Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon

Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt [illegible] Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame [illegible] *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Carol Mather.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S.)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hardy, Peter

Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'hauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr. Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Requirements and Resources) Miscellaneous Provisions (No. 2) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 11th November, be approved.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): To save the time of the House, I propose to put together the Questions on motions 3 to 8.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Legal Aid and Advice (Scotland)

That the Legal Aid (Scotland) (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985, dated 25th October 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 6th November, be approved.

That the Legal Advice and Assistance (Scotland) (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985, dated 25th October 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 6th November, be approved.

Legal Aid and Advice

That the Legal Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1614), dated 23rd October 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 6th November, be approved.

That the Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1615), dated 23rd October 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 6th November, be approved.

Dentists

That the draft Dental Auxiliaries (Amendment) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 21st October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

That the draft Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 29th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Question agreed to.

Unemployment (Alyn and Deeside)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

12.12 am

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): My speech must begin with a letter sent to me on behalf of the Catharall brickyards work force at Buckley by the Transport and General Workers' Union branch secretary, Mr. Godfrey Catherall, who is no relation. Mr. Catherall is the senior shop steward. He has a record of loyal and lengthy service. His views are a reflection of the strength of feeling among the members of the work force who received their redundancy notices about three weeks ago. They were surprised. They are angry and bewildered. Their prospects for obtaining work are not good. They are fine men and, as a work force, they have a superb record. I want Her Majesty's Government to help my constituents.

Mr. Godfrey Catherall wrote:

"On October 21st Hanson Trust, via Butterley Buildings, gave notice to 60 most loyal employees to terminate their employment at the brickmaking factory, known as Catharall's works, Buckley. Brickmaking has been continuous there since 1760 and now, after a period of 13 years of profit making, Hanson Trust close the site with all its assets intact, ready for sale. How do they treat their employees? They treat them ruthlessly, not with generosity or caring, as Hanson Trust representatives claim. They will not make ready their economic reasonings for closure, and the people involved are very angry. Redundancy payments are being made, but it is simply peanuts to men who have no possible opportunity of finding employment elsewhere. Redundancy—no"—

says Mr. Catherall—

"retirement—yes, for all involved. Please bring notice to all people of our plight."

That is the letter that the shop steward gave to me.

Butterley Building Materials Ltd. is a wholly owned subsidiary of the massive food and industrial concern, the Hanson Trust. The Hanson Trust reported profits before tax for each of the past five years as follows: 1980, £39·1 million; 1981, £49·7 million; 1982, £60·4 million; 1983, £91·1 million; and 1984, £169·1 million. Butterley Brick's end of year financial statement for 1984 reports a record profit and that it is now the number one brick producer in the United Kingdom within its area. For 9 October 1985, Butterley reported increased profits and anticipated good results for the year. Hanson Brick profits, which is London Brick plus Butterley, in 1984 reported a profit of £32·6 million. That is the financial background to the redundancy notices given to my constituents in Buckley. Clearly, there is no financial crisis in the Hanson Trust, Butterley or Hanson Brick.

My constituents are perplexed to hear that the Hanson Trust is poised to make a

"milestone in world takeover history."

That was reported on Channel 4's "Money Programme" on Sunday 10 November. We learnt from the programme that the chairman of the Hanson Trust was in courtroom 36, United States district court, New York, making legal history in a takeover dog fight which would enable the Hanson Trust to expand in the United States. While the Hanson Trust told its subsidiary to close the brickyards at Buckley, Channel 4 revealed that $72 a share was being offered by the trust for its quarry in the United States.

Some of my constituents at Buckley, soon to join one of Wales's longest dole queues, are sceptical about why the closure is being proposed. They, and their union officers, led by Mr. John Beard, JP — their district officer, who has worked hard on the case—want access to the company's accounts and an economic breakdown of the closure. They have been informed that Hanson policy is that no information of that nature must ever be given to the work force. Will the Government ensure that the company accounts are revealed to the work force—not just information that the company may wish to give, but the full accounts which are presented for audit by law? I have asked the Secretary of State for Employment to assist the work force to that end, but so far I have had only an acknowledgement of my letter of 26 October. Will the Minister urge the company to assist in setting up a co-operative, if the work force expresses a wish to do so?

The Secretary of State for Wales, when I asked him in October to intervene on behalf of the work force, told me that the matter was for the commercial judgment of the company. His response has greatly disappointed my constituents. Will the Minister assist in preventing the closure and in helping the factory to an assured future?

There has never been a dispute at the site, and my people have done everything asked of them. They are a superb, experienced and loyal work force of male and female employees, who have brought only honour and profit to the owners. Their bitter conclusion is that it is clearly a disadvantage to be made redundant by a private enterprise company. Redundancy payments in the private sector are considerably lower than in the public sector. It could be that redundancy rates in the private sector in the south-east of England are higher than in Wales.

Clearly, if my constituents were employed by the Welsh water authority, the British Steel Corporation or the National Coal Board, they would be much better off. When some of my constituents leave Catharalls they will receive not so much redundancy, as early retirement. I am concerned about the cash paid by the private sector compared with that from the public sector.

Should the closure go ahead, there is seething resentment at the prospect of meagre redundancy payments. It has come to the notice of the work force that when the Hanson Trust closed the London Brick company, treble redundancy was paid and the balance of the 90-day notice, which is more than double what is proposed at Buckley.

My constituents are shrewd. They noted that Hanson took over the London Brick company last year. Now the Catharall brickyard is to be closed. They wonder whether the takeover and the closure are related. Are they?

In a recent "Whicker's World" programme Hanson executives were reported as saying they were ruthless but generous. My constituents say that they are ruthless; I say, let them be generous.

Five years after probably the largest industrial closure in modern-day western Europe jobs in north-east Wales are again vanishing. Although the numbers involved are smaller than in steelmaking at Shotton in 1980-81 when 8,000 jobs were lost, it is disturbing that new industries intended to replace steel are now shedding labour.

In April this year P D Can closed, with the loss of 80 jobs, only two years after setting up on the Deeside industrial park. The news that Deeside Titanium is to make 40 workers redundant after other natural wastage losses is another blow to Clwyd, particularly as the venture was by the first heavy manufacturing company to offer alternative jobs to steelmaking.

The latest figures for jobcentre areas reveal that at Mold 2,261 people are unemployed; at Shotton, 2,873; at Wrexham, 6,542; at Holywell, 1,405; and at Flint 1,328.

In the Deeside travel-to-work area 9,239 men—or 22·7 per cent.—are unemployed. The female rate is 15·7 per cent. In total 13,477 people are unemployed—19·9 per cent. In neighbouring Wrexham, over 8,000 people are out work—18 per cent. of more.

In Alyn and Deeside, 2,983 men are out of work, and 4,417 people are without jobs. In the Delyn local authority area, 3,206 men are out of work, and 4,589 in total. In Glyndwr, 1,750 people are jobless, and in Rhuddlan, 4,119.

In the county of Clwyd 24,982 people are jobless—18·6 per cent. That includes 16,996 men, representing 21·6 per cent. male unemployment. In Wales as a whole over 182,000 people are jobless. In Clwyd, 1,322 young people claiming benefit are jobless. Many of them live in Alyn and Deeside.

Notwithstanding the serious figures, I regret that on Deeside no advance factories between 1,500 sq ft and 10,000 sq ft are available to incoming industrialists. That means that Deeside is losing the vital inquiries made by industrialists prior to their location decisions. That is said by those whose business it is to obtain new projects. That does not happen in England. Therefore, we are at a disadvantage. We lose chances to make inroads into the large dole queues in north-east Wales. I am seriously concerned at the inability of the Government and the Welsh Development Agency to make available such advance factories as I have named, and Deeside clearly is neglected in that respect.

It is fair to say that modern manufacturing industries are a vital ingredient in regional development. No area recovering from industrial decline can succeed without a hardcore of jobs in that sector. Shotton cannot be transformed into the City of London and seek its salvation by deindustrialisation. The service sector is important—it provides new jobs—but it cannot grow in a vacuum. Local authorities have imaginative plans for tourism projects in the Shotton new development zone, but they must be complementary to manufacturing, not alternatives.

The problem is severe because of the combination of growth in the number of young people seeking work and the reduction in employment in manufacturing. The job losses in industry reported recently are an alarming sign that the downward trend might resume. That demands positive action.

The answer to recession in the late 1970s affected the United Kingdom exceptionally, and within it areas such as Alyn and Deeside suffered even more. The worrying signs warn against inaction. It is that inaction of which I complain in the Government's economic policy as it affects Wales, especially Alyn and Deeside. What is required is a change of Government policy so that we can make true inroads into the large dole queues.

Although there are examples of new industry in Alyn and Deeside on fine industrial estates, it appears to be difficult to make real inroads into the unemployment total, notwithstanding the good work being done to attract new industries and jobs to the Deeside and Clwyd areas. It is sad that many men are doomed never to work again in north-east Wales, unless there is a major change in Government policy.

On the positive side, there is the superb prospect of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales opening the Shotton paper mill next month. But when we celebrate that great success, we should also understand that the loss of P. D. Can and the redundancies at Deeside Titanium and at the Catharall brickyard will wipe out the gains in jobs at the paper mill.

Many of the brickyard workers are young men with wives and children to support. Many of them have mortgages and considerable hire purchase commitments. The future is grim for that work force. I have met its representatives twice, and I can tell the House that their anger and dismay are genuine. They would be foolish not to be angry and not to ask the Government to give them assistance. They are to suffer an injustice, and they do not deserve that kick in the teeth.

I ask Ministers to open the accounts to leaders of the work force. If redundancies there must be, let them be on the very best terms. Hanson can afford to be generous. It is not being generous, yet its profits are huge. Its profits next year will be even larger. It is monstrous that that brickyard will close when thousands of Welsh houses are in need of repair and modernisation. There is also a pressing need for new homes for the elderly, the homeless and the handicapped. If that job were tackled, brickyards such as Catharalls would expand rather than close.

I hope that the Minister will give some helpful replies tonight to the members of a loyal work force who fear that, if they lose their jobs, they will remain unemployed for a very long time.

12.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Mark Robinson): The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) has highlighted a specific problem, and I recognise the sincerity with which he has brought the matter to our attention in the calm of this Adjournment debate. He also raised broader issues about the employment situation in his constituency generally, and I shall, if time permits—and only a short time has been left to me—deal with the broader, as well as the narrow, issues that he raised.

In fairness to the hon. Gentleman, I shall deal first with the Catharall works, about which he spoke at considerable length. He explained not only his fears, but those of the work force, which is affected by these redundancies and the closure, which we greatly regret. He also referred to the role of the Hanson Trust, and I noted the points he made about that.

Nobody can be other than concerned when jobs are lost, but it must be for the companies concerned to determine the future of their plants in the light of all the circumstances before them. The hon. Gentleman raised the issue of financial information on the performance of the Catharall works and pointed out that the work force seemed not to have been given the full information for which it had been looking.

As the hon. Gentleman correctly said, the accounts of Butterley Building Materials Ltd. are available, the most recent being for the year to September 1984, but they do not identify separately the financial performance of the works at Buckley. Clearly, in situations such as this, a company should make available to its work force appropriate information relating to its decisions. This, however, under company law as it exists now, is a matter for the company's own judgment, and it is not a matter in

[Mr. Mark Robinson]

which the Government could, or would interfere. Having said that, on behalf of the hon. Gentleman, I urge the company to make the relevant information available.

Redundancy terms are for the work force to resolve with the management. If the members of the work force cannot obtain satisfactory terms in negotiation with their employers, they can make the relevant complaint to the local industrial tribunal. Other issues and possible solutions are obviously open to them, but the hon. Gentleman will agree that in this kind of situation it is important that the company concerned should be open with the work force and set in train a form of consultation to enable the employees to be fully in the picture and know where they stand and what the future holds for them. Although I am not able to give the hon. Gentleman some of the assurances that he sought—because they are not within my power to give—I hope that at least what I have said has been of some assistance to him and his constituents who have been affected.

We are here tonight to discuss also employment in Alyn and Deeside. The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Government should do more and spend more, which provides me with a valuable opportunity to set the record straight about the Government's public expenditure record as it relates to the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

While we accept that Alyn and Deeside, in common with many other parts of Wales, has high levels of unemployment, the Government have always recognised that the task is to assist in attracting new real jobs that offer a long-term future, rather than to try to buy short-term jobs that are destroyed nearly as quickly as they are created. We must look at the hon. Gentleman's constituency in the context of the overall travel-to-work area and the regional context of its location.

The travel-to-work area of which Alyn and Deeside is part is, of course, a development area qualifying for the highest available levels of regional industrial assistance which consists of automatic capital or job-related grants plus selective assistance. Between January 1984 and the end of October this year, 14 offers of selective assistance have been accepted by investors hoping to provide 1,326 jobs in the constituency. In the county of Clwyd as a whole, 46 such offers have been accepted, providing prospects for 2,996 jobs and safeguarding 1,296 existing ones in the same period.

The record of sound achievement by the WDA—the hon. Gentleman referred to the agency—gives equally impressive testimony to the efforts being put in. Since May 1979, 77 factory units providing 700,000 sq ft have been completed in the constituency by the WDA, and during the past nine months alone seven units have been allocated. All this is part of a factory programme for the travel-to-work area which has provided a total of 140 factories since 1979, and for the county as a whole has provided 210 advance factory units comprising 1·5 million sq ft of floor space. I do not see any evidence here of a lack of commitment to investment.

It is worth looking more closely at one or two specific developments. For example, there is the United Paper Mills project at Shotton, where £100 million has been invested in a plant whose benefits to employment in the forestry industry go far beyond the 250 directly created jobs which are expected to arise.

At the Deeside industrial park, which in itself is one of the major industrial successes of Wales, Europe's first thin film disk manufacturing plant is expected to get into full-scale production next year and eventually to employ about 250 people. CWS's project at Deeside park, producing breakfast cereal, promises 150 jobs, and the very successful Iceland Frozen Foods is now hoping to provide another 100 new jobs by 1988. The Alyn and Deeside constituency also extends into the Wrexham travel-to-work area and includes Llay, where Sharp has been particularly successful, promising over 800 new jobs from its video recorder and microwave projects, which I am sure has an implication for the hon. Gentleman's constituency. The area therefore has already established a proven record of success, together with a clear potential. I remind the hon. Gentleman that there are other areas of the country which would be very glad of the successes that have been achieved in and around his constituency.

In that respect, north-east Clwyd has captured three major Japanese investments—Sharp, Brother and Hoya Lens. This is part of our overall achievement in inward investment, which has culminated in Wales obtaining one quarter of the inward investment into the United Kingdom for two years running.

This positive news is not limited to new companies or enterprises. What we must also recognise is the quite admirable efforts of the Shotton work force in recent times in transforming the performance of the works. Production records are constantly being broken—most recently on the colorcoat line where demand for the product has grown so dramatically. We look for similar achievements from the new Galvalume project, where an investment of £30 million is nearing completion.

In saying this, it would be wrong not to make reference to the Courtaulds closure, which has affected the whole area of north-east Clwyd, including the hon. Gentleman's constituency. As in all situations of this kind, the Government's response was prompt and generous. In June my right hon. Friend announced a range of measures to assist the area affected by the green field closure, covering both social and economic development, which could result in expenditure totalling over £6·5 million on schemes already identified. To this package the company has now, in agreement with the local authorities and in consultation with the Government, added its own comprehensive set of initiatives to assist its former employees wherever it can but including the free transfer of the green field site to the local authority. Alyn and Deeside will benefit from my right hon. Friend's package, and the council has been allocated additional urban programme assistance for 1985-86 amounting to £175,000 for two schemes under the supplementary allocation made in September. In saying that, I am glad of this opportunity to pay tribute to the tireless work of my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffen)—I am pleased to see him in the Chamber tonight—on behalf of his constituency in this matter.

During 1986-87 it is hoped to start work on the new road bridge over the Wrexham-Bidston railway, which is to receive substantial grant assistance. This will greatly improve the currently restricted access to the Shotton paper mill and open up sites on the western side of the railway for further industrial development.

It is important to recognise, too, the context of public expenditure in which we are working. The Government are attacked as being opposed to constructive public investment. If we were talking against a background of

notably low totals of investment in capital this might be justified, but in fact we are speaking against a background, particularly in Wales, of high levels of investment in programmes for factory building—over £300 million has been spent by the various agencies since 1979—through hospital construction—£250 million since 1979—to road building—over £600 million has been spent on trunk roads since 1979. In the county of Clwyd alone since 1979 well over £350 million of public funds has been invested by the Welsh Office and by the WDA. This includes the A55 improvement programme, which has seen the construction completed in September 1984 of the Hawarden bypass, which passes through the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

I would not wish to doubt the sincerity of the hon. Gentleman's concern for his constituency which is reflected in the specific case that he brought before the House. It is a simple fact, however, that the massive increases in present planned levels of public spending of the sort which the hon. Gentlemen has so fervently advocated, on this and many other occasions, could destroy jobs if used excessively. Such policies characterised the Labour Government.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will consider carefully what I have said tonight and acknowledge that his concern is shared by a Government who are backing their concern with concerted action. In Alyn and Deeside there are excellent prospects for attracting further industrial investment and growth. Major public investment, policies to attract industry, major promotional effort and, above all, a major record of sound achievement are bringing in new jobs to the hon. Gentleman's constituency and will continue to do so.

Clearly there is still far to go, but all that has been done has enabled Alyn and Deeside to establish a formidable record in creating new and successful enterprises and has made Alyn and Deeside one of the most outstanding attractive prospects anywhere in Wales for attracting industrial investment and growth. That is what——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eighteen minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LOTHIAN REGION (EDINBURGH WESTERN RELIEF ROAD) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *(By Order)*

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 28 November.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Aujeszky's Disease

1. **Mr. Latham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on his meetings with the National Farmers Union regarding the financing of the Aujeszky's disease eradication fund.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): I met representatives of the pig disease eradication fund, including members of the NFU, on 17 June, when I repeated that the Government had agreed to undertake the Aujeszky's disease control and eradication scheme solely on the basis that the industry would meet the net costs of compensation for slaughter. I told them that I could not agree to a departure from this clearly understood arrangement.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the present deficit on the fund is about £13·5 million and that hard-pressed pig producers are likely to have to shell out well into the 1990s? Will he reconsider his rejection of the report of the Select Committee on Agriculture and see whether he can do anything to help this hard-pressed industry?

Mr. Jopling: I am aware of the size of the overdraft, but I point out that £3·7 million was incurred by consequential loss arrangements which the fund introduced in direct conflict with the advice of my Department.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Minister accept that the ADEF has been a remarkable example of Government and industry working together to tackle a major disease afflicting agriculture? Why has he rejected the Select Committee's conclusion that the Ministry was responsible for some of the deficit? Why does he not give a handout in the way that has been suggested?

Mr. Jopling: I agree that the liaison between the Government and the promoters of the fund has been successful, and I hope that soon we shall be able to announce that the disease has been stamped out altogether. After all, there were only 10 cases this year compared with 443 in 1983. A clear deal was made between the Government and the sponsors when the scheme started, and I see no reason to break that understanding and arrangement now.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is my right hon. Friend aware that neither his Department nor those representing pig producers foresaw a run on funds and the accumulating interest payments, which are now out of control any more, than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland foresaw the need to ask for £50 million a year because of the unforeseen burden placed on Scottish ratepayers by revaluation? Therefore, will he exert the same muscle in Cabinet as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has done for his Department, and carry out the recommendations of the Select Committee?

Mr. Jopling: The cases are not comparable. I remind my hon. Friend that, when the polls were begun, the Government emphasised that the original estimates had to be treated with caution and that it was not possible to determine with accuracy the extent of the disease and other factors before the eradication schemes were started.

Mr. Randall: Does the Minister agree that unless the Government make good the shortfall in the financing of the scheme the industry's confidence could be damaged, and that might affect its support for other schemes in the future?

Mr. Jopling: I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall) on his appointment and welcome him to the Opposition Front Bench. I hope that he will speak for the Opposition for many a long year.

There is another side to the story which the promoters of the scheme might do well to bear in mind. The hon. Gentleman says that the producers' confidence may have been dented. The Government's confidence in entering into another similar arrangement, however desirable, might also be dented if this type of hassle goes on afterwards to try to break the original terms of the deal.

Milk Quotas

2. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards the new EEC outgoers scheme.

Mr. Jopling: I have received representations on the proposed Community outgoers scheme from hon. Members, interested organisations and individual farmers. These have reflected a number of concerns, including the position of tenant farmers and landlords. The Commission's proposals for the scheme have only recently been published. I am still considering the detailed provisions.

While in principle I am in favour of measures aimed at bringing supply and demand in the milk sector closer together, I am equally concerned to ensure that any such scheme operates fairly throughout the Community. It is

important that the scheme should reflect the interests of all concerned, and in particular that a careful balance is struck between the interests of landlords and tenants.

Mr. Colvin: I welcome that reply. I am glad that no decision has yet been reached. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the basis of his policy on this matter will be that no tenant shall be allowed to surrender or transfer his quota without his landlord's consent? Otherwise, we shall risk damaging the viability, profitability and earnings potential of farms, which will be to the detriment of the relationship between landlord and tenant—a partnership which has served this country well over the years.

Mr. Jopling: I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has said. I believe that there is general agreement throughout the industry that in most cases both landlord and tenant have contributed to the quota. It would be right to try to ensure that a careful balance is struck so that our landlord-tenant system is not jeopardised.

Miss Maynard: Will the Minister confirm that he will not oppose a special redundancy payments scheme for dairy farm workers if the EEC decides to introduce an outgoers scheme for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Lady will be aware that I have on many occasions answered questions about redundancy arrangements. She knows as well as anyone in the House that there are already widespread redundancy arrangements and that many companies involved in agriculture have redundancy arrangements more generous than the basic state scheme.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that there is considerable anxiety within agriculture about the knock-on effect of a further outgoers scheme, desirable though that might be? Will he bring forward his review of United Kingdom agriculture in order to give a better sense of direction to those involved in making important decisions in that respect?

Mr. Jopling: Yes, Sir. I understand what my hon. Friend says about that, and I have some sympathy with it. Even with the milk quota scheme which is in place Community production still exceeds consumption by, in broad terms, 13 per cent. Measures are necessary to bring supply more closely in line with demand. Any such measures must be applied fairly throughout the whole of the Community.

Mr. Home Robertson: We understand the need to bring dairy surpluses under control, but is the Minister aware that quotas and outgoers payments are only part of the story? First, is there not an urgent need to provide special compensation for the thousands of farm and creamery employees who are being thrown out of work as a result of what is happening? Secondly, does he accept that there is a need for positive guidance to avoid the transfer of the land of up to 2,000 farmers into commodities such as cereals and beef, which are already in surplus? The Government treated the dairy industry disgracefully last year. Will the Minister give an undertaking that he will try to get it right in 1986?

Mr. Jopling: I understand that the hon. Gentleman has a new rival on the Opposition Front Bench, but there is no reason to use such extravagant language.

As I said to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard), there is a redundancy arrangement which applies throughout the industry. I understand that many of our dairies, including the Milk Marketing Board, run their own redundancy schemes, which are more generous than the standard arrangement.

3. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received in the last six months about milk quotas.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): My right hon. Friend and I have received a substantial number of representations in the past six months about milk quotas from hon. Members, the industry organisations and individual producers.

Mr. Oppenheim: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Italians are still not enforcing dairy quotas at farm level and that there are suspicions that the French are not enforcing the quotas properly? Does my right hon. Friend appreciate that that causes great resentment among British farmers, who have suffered greatly from the quotas?

Mr. Gummer: It causes great resentment if anyone feels that the system is unfairly imposed. For that reason, we have taken every measure to ensure that these complaints are followed up rapidly. The Commission is considering them closely.

Mr. Flannery: Is the Minister aware that a group of tenant farmer brothers who took over a small farm shortly before the quotas were introduced are now living on the breadline? They came to see me to tell me of their position. I wonder just how many small tenant farmers are suffering as a result of milk quotas.

Mr. Gummer: I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows how careful we have been to try to use any extra milk that is available to provide help for those who have specific problems. If instances of specific problems had come to his notice, there were methods by which they could have been examined.

Mr. Flannery: The scheme has not worked very well.

Mr. Gummer: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman should say that it has not worked very well. The industry, as a whole, thinks that it has worked extremely well. Measures were taken on the basis of the advice that was received from the industry. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree with that.

Mr. Cash: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are adequate powers under the treaty of Rome for ensuring that when member states are in default in these matters action can be enforced against them? Will he make inquiries to ascertain whether we have been able to do that?

Mr. Gummer: There is no doubt that we shall take any action that is open to us to ensure that these schemes are carried out properly. We need information, rather than vague reports which undermine what is otherwise an equitable scheme.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister give a guarantee that our producers will not be penalised because there may be a shortfall in production under quota this year as a result of bad weather during the summer? We understand that we may be as much as 2 per cent. under quota. It would be atrocious if that shortfall were to be added to any overall cut in quota next year or after that.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman knows that we have made it clear that we do not consider that any shortfall in quota should be taken into account in that way.

Food From Britain

4. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will confirm the arrangements for the likely future level of Government funding for Food From Britain.

Mr. Jopling: I announced recently that for each of the three years from 1988-89 the Government will make available to Food From Britain's marketing activities £1 for every £2 contributed by industry up to a maximum of £2·5 million a year, provided that the industry contributes at least £3 million per year. This is in addition to the £14 million pump-priming grant which covered the organisation's first five years up to 1987-88.

Mr. Maclean: I thank my right hon. Friend for continuing to fund Food From Britain. He will be aware that Britain's agricultural produce is the finest in the world. Is he satisfied that Food From Britain is making the most of the marketing opportunities that are available to it? Does he agree with me that much more could be done?

Mr. Jopling: I agree that much more could be done. We have made more money available to allow that work to be done. Food From Britain has made an excellent start. It now has 16 commodity sectors which already bear the food mark and enable producers to guarantee quality produce for consumers. Good progress has been made also with exports. The record British presence recently at the ANUGA food fair demonstrates the marketing opportunities that exist for British exports of the excellent quality to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. John: Does the Minister agree that even the best food needs to be marketed strongly in the current situation? How does he equate the money funded for Food From Britain with the £40 million available in France for marketing its products?

Mr. Jopling: We started a good deal later than some countries. The tragedy is that when the Labour party was in power it did absolutely nothing about this. It fell to this Government to found Food From Britain. We are building it up in a commendable way.

Milk Quotas

5. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the new proposals from the EEC on tenants' rights in relation to the disposal of milk quotas.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations on the proposed Community outgoers scheme from hon. Members, interested organisations and individual farmers. These have reflected a number of concerns, including the position of tenant farmers and landlords.

Mr. Ashdown: I listened carefully to that answer and to the answer given by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). Frankly, I remain unclear about the extent of the Government's commitment to help tenant farmers out of their present predicament. On milk quotas, do the Government now share the Commission's recognition of the rights of tenant farmers? If so, will the right hon. Gentleman press immediately to alleviate the conditions of tenant farmers in relation to milk quotas?

Mr. Gummer: Recognition of rights does not necessarily result in an answer that suits our particular landlord and tenant system. We have clearly said that we recognise that, in almost every case, both tenants and landlords have contributed to production on dairy farms and that we are trying to find ways to have that position recognised. We want it recognised in the context of our situation, not someone else's.

Mr. Hicks: Does my right hon. Friend accept that in many cases the tenant has made the relevant capital investment and that any arrangements must take that fact into account?

Mr. Gummer: We said that we would take proper cognisance of that fact and the fact that the landlord also has an interest. We want to ensure that the arrangements suit our landlord and tenant system, not just the system in other countries.

Mr. Andy Stewart: In view of the adverse summer weather experienced in the United Kingdom and the additional debts that went with it, will my right hon. Friend consider whether, under the new outgoers scheme, landlords and tenants alike may release part of the quota and take advantage of the scheme to alleviate their financial difficulties?

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend will be aware that we have only recently received the preliminary proposals from the Commission. We have been looking at them carefully. That is one of the issues that we will have to take into account.

Food (Quality)

6. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to improve the quality of food.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): There is already a comprehensive range of legislation regulating the safety, quality and labelling of food. Regulations are kept under review so as to take account of new developments.

Mr. Lloyd: What does the Minister intend to do about those families in receipt of family income supplement or supplementary benefit who do not have enough money to buy food that conforms with the Government's nutritional guidelines?

Mrs. Fenner: The issuing of nutritional guidelines is a matter for the Department of Health and Social Security, and I am certain that it is balancing those factors.

Sir Paul Hawkins: Will my hon. Friend make it clear that food in Britain is of far better quality and worth than the food that is available in many other countries? Will she also make it clear that we should not put any more labels on food, as they only distract the attention of ordinary housewives?

Mrs. Fenner: I wholly agree with the first comments made by my hon. Friend, but we have accepted the

recommendations of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food report, ensuring that food will be labelled with its fat content. We are looking at a non-statutory format for nutritional labelling, too.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that one of the ways in which the quality of food is enhanced is through the valuable work done at Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food research centres? In the light of that, is it not a scandal that the Government are proposing to close Shardlow Hall in the east midlands by 6 March next year, all for the sake of £1·6 million, yet they can find £252 million to balance the books of the Common Market, and we find that fraud amounting to £600 million has gone on in the Common Market? If the Government can find money for that, why can they not find the money to save the jobs at the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service and make sure that the taxpayer does not have to find more money to finance the dole queue?

Mrs. Fenner: The hon. Gentleman knows that that matter does not arise out of this question. We have spent about £200 million on agriculture and food research, and the Government are still contributing greatly to research. However, the food industry also does a great deal in research.

Mr. Rowe: Is my hon. Friend aware of the potential threat to the quality of food because of the contraction of competition, caused, among other things, by the practice of discriminatory discounting and other trading practices by the large retail chains? Will the Department take an interest in that matter, although it does not come directly under its responsibility?

Mrs. Fenner: I can assure my hon. Friend that my Department has taken a considerable interest in the matter, but he will be aware that the Office of Fair Trading is the organisation that looks at it. Recently, it considered exactly that point. It found that current practices are not against the public interest, but, of course, it will look at any cases that are brought before it.

Mr. Dalyell: Will Ministers be taking the parliamentary opportunity on Monday of explaining in detail precisely why they find it necessary to cut 27 posts in the Soil Survey of England and Wales and other agricultural research, which has its effect on the quality of food?

Mrs. Fenner: I notice that the hon. Gentleman added the bit about food at the end of his question. I am sure he will agree that that area of research is not wholly applicable to this question, which is about the quality of food.

Common Agricultural Policy

7. **Mr. Jackson** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in discussions with his European colleagues on the Commission's Green Paper, "Perspectives for the Common Agricultural Policy".

Mr. Jopling: The Council had an initial debate on the Green Paper when it met informally in September. At its meeting this week there was discussion based on a Commission memorandum on specific ideas for the cereals sector. The Commission has given notice of its intention to issue a memorandum next month covering its wider conclusions from the "Perspectives" exercise. We shall continue to press for a realistic price policy to be adopted as a central element in tackling the problems of costly surpluses in the CAP.

Mr. Jackson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Commission's proposals for cereals are likely to bear more heavily on the United Kingdom than on other parts of the Community? What steps does he propose to take to ensure that that does not happen?

Mr. Jopling: Co-responsibility levies would pose real difficulties of administration and equity, as my hon. Friend said. They would distort the proper working of the market. We should remember that the levy is a revenue-raising device to provide temporary relief for the budget. Rigorous long-term action on the price level remains indispensable to bring the cereals sector into better balance. Those were all points that I raised at the Council meeting this week.

Mr. Strang: Will the Minister acknowledge that the food mountains in this country are now at record levels and that the millions of tonnes of grain that are dumped in secret stores represent a scandalous misuse of resources? Do his earlier answers mean that he recognises that the proposed co-responsibility levy on cereals will make things worse, because the farmers will see it as a forerunner for quotas and expect him to insist on cereal price cuts?

Mr. Jopling: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman shares my view about the importance of price cuts and the relative ineffectiveness of co-responsibility levies. He also referred to the large quantities of grain stored in this country. We have those tremendous surpluses throughout the Community basically because during the past seven or eight years the Council of Ministers has ignored the advice given to it by the hon. Gentleman's colleagues while his party was in power, and by my colleagues while this Government have been in power. If the Community had taken the British advice from both parties, the surpluses would be less today.

Mr. Body: In view of that answer, will my right hon. Friend explain why there is no surplus and no wheat going into intervention in France, while we have a surplus of 6 million tonnes, which is likely to rise to 7 million tonnes? This morning the Agriculture Select Committee was told that that vast quantity of wheat was now valueless and that nobody wanted to buy it. This year we shall import 3 million tonnes of wheat from France and elsewhere for milling purposes because our wheat is, unfortunately, valueless and not wanted by our trade.

Mr. Jopling: I do not accept that the wheat that we produce is valueless. That is not true. One of the matters about which we have recently been pressing the Commission is that it should have schemes to export grain of feed quality because there are markets in the world where that type of grain is needed. I hope that before long we can persuade the Commission to introduce a scheme that will in particular reduce the stocks of feed quality wheat that we have in store.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Has the Minister, in his discussions with his colleagues in the Community, considered the social and regional policy implications of a substantial shift from price support to direct income aids, which is proposed in the Green Paper?

Mr. Jopling: Yes, I have considered that. I am worried about the possibility of income aids. The Commission has not yet made any proposals, and there would be difficult problems to overcome regarding income aids. They are difficult to administer, there would be problems of conflicts with existing social security schemes, and expense is a major factor. It is an area where national policies could well be far more appropriate. We could find that assistance from income aids would go disproportionately to other countries, and not to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his stand on trying to reduce cereal surpluses? Does he recognise that there is no difference between co-responsibility levies, price restraints and price cuts? In the first instance they will encourage higher production, which is the road we followed on milk, when we refused to consider milk quotas until the last moment. Will my right hon. Friend urgently change his mind and take steps to impose some form of cereal quota throughout the EC?

Mr. Jopling: It is not true that there is no difference between price cuts and co-responsibility levies, because the advantage of a price cut over a levy is that it reduces the price to the livestock producer and makes the product more competitive in the export markets. I am surprised to hear my hon. Friend express support for quotas. If, for example, he wants to put our cereals industry into a straightjacket, so that we who are so efficient would not have the opportunity of increasing our share of European production, that will do a great disservice to the interests of our country, quite apart from the fact that in some parts of the Community it is almost impossible to administer cereal quotas.

Mr. McCusker: In view of the importance of the document to the agriculture industries of both parts of the island of Ireland, and bearing in mind that some people in the EC will attempt to promote a common agricultural policy for the whole of that island, can the Minister tell us whether he intends to seek the advice of the Anglo-Irish ministerial council on that and other matters, where some people will advocate such a CAP?

Mr. Jopling: I have no such plans at this minute.

Milk Quotas

8. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give his approval to the leasing of dairy quotas.

12. **Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in efforts to introduce greater flexibility into the milk quota regime.

Mr. Gummer: I attach great importance to obtaining better arrangements for the transfer of quota between producers. We have been pressing the Commission to bring forward proposals on this, and shall continue to do so. In the meantime, we are exploring the scope for flexibility within the framework of the present Community rules.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is an example of when Government lawyers ought to use their customary initiative? Even if it is not possible for technical reasons to indulge in quota leasing, should it not be possible to devise other methods, perhaps the pooling of quotas? In fairness to the dairy industry, must not such steps be taken fairly urgently?

Mr. Gummer: I am not sure that my hon. Friend should restrict his comments to Government lawyers. All concerned might consider how flexibility can be achieved. If quotas are not to have a sterilising effect on the industry, there must be flexibility. We shall continue to press the Commission for such changes.

Mr. Speaker: I call Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: No. 12, Sir.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's question is being taken with question No. 8.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. There is a lot of rhubarb around here.

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Commission asked for a study on quotas? Has my hon. Friend received that report from the Commission? If so, when will it be published?

Mr. Gummer: We have pressed the Commission for such a study and asked it to take account of the problems in Britain that mean that flexibility is more important here than, perhaps, elsewhere. We are pressing the Commission for the results of the study and for it to take seriously the fact that we are unable to move quotas. Tight control over the system will mean that no new people will be able to enter the industry.

Severe Weather Payments

9. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is able to indicate into what areas the additional Government assistance will be channelled for farmers affected by recent bad weather conditions.

Mr. Jopling: I have been examining the best way in which to help those worst affected in the livestock sector by the exceptionally bad weather and hope to be able to make an announcement very shortly.

Sir Hector Monro: In view of the catastrophic weather in the north, in Scotland and in Northern Ireland recently, will my right hon. Friend try to make his announcement just as quickly as he can? Even more important, will he make the payments this year if at all possible?

Mr. Jopling: Yes, we shall make the announcement as quickly as we can. I am prepared to see how we can bring payments forward as soon as possible.

Mr. Kirkwood: What has the Minister been doing with his time? He announced at the Conservative party conference that aid would be made available, but there has been a deafening silence since. Is he aware that about £25 million has been lost in my Scottish border constituency as a result of this summer and that there is a lack of winter fodder for upland farmers? When will he make a statement? If it is not next week, it will have been too long in coming.

Mr. Jopling: We quite rightly wanted to get the full picture and have used the autumn to that end. We are now reaching the point at which we can pinpoint the areas that have had the greatest difficulty as a result of the atrocious weather. I hope that we can make a statement very soon.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does cutting agricultural research constitute providing additional resources for farmers in the areas that have been hit by the bad weather? Why do the Government intend to introduce charges for the services offered by ADAS, payable by these very farmers——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question relates to bad weather.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My question is relevant.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would relate his question to the subject, please.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The farmers in these areas are suffering and will have to pay the high charges for ADAS. Why should they not be relieved of those charges?

Mr. Jopling: I do not suppose that farmers in Cumbria will read that question sympathetically. The hon. Gentleman missed the opportunity to press for the problems of Cumbria to be taken into account. Although he missed that opportunity, I can assure him that I am looking after those farmers very well.

Mr. Maclean: I echo what my right hon. Friend has just said. Will he take it from me that it is essential that he takes as long as necessary to get the bad weather payments right? Will he ensure that he consults all sectors of the industry so that he may have as wide a spread of advice as possible on how the payment should be administered and to whom it should be allocated?

Mr. Jopling: I pay tribute to the responsible advice that we have had from many people in trying to pinpoint the areas where the problems are greatest and where help is needed most.

Mr. John: When he announced the scheme at the Conservative party conference, the Minister promised that it would be in place by the end of October. This will be the longest October on record. Does he not realise that the livestock are suffering now? Will he expedite from the Treasury money as well as promises?

Mr. Jopling: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman made that announcement at his conference, but I do not recall giving an understanding that the scheme would be in place by the end of October. All I can say is that we want to get a full picture of the total effect of the bad weather before deciding how best to spend the money that we have available.

Frozen Foodstuffs

10. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received about European Community document 9402/84 on the approximation of laws relating to quick-frozen foodstuffs.

Mrs. Fenner: We circulated the draft proposals for a Council directive on quick-frozen foodstuffs to a wide range of interested organisations. We have received comments from representatives of frozen food manufacturers, distributors and retailers and refrigeration engineers.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend do all in her power to ensure that this ill-conceived directive is not imposed upon the people of this country, who have more experience in the frozen food industry than the rest of the Community put together?

Mrs. Fenner: I agree with my hon. Friend that this country has tremendous expertise in the production of frozen food. I acknowledge my hon. Friend's specialist knowledge. He will know from the debate we had earlier this year that we opposed the directive in its present form. We shall be seeking modifications to the proposals to make them sounder and more acceptable.

Ancient Monuments

11. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the agricultural aspects of conserving ancient monuments.

Mrs. Fenner: Many ancient monuments are situated on agricultural land and in these cases the main responsibility for their day-to-day protection lies with the farmer concerned. It is, of course, a criminal offence to destroy or cause damage to any protected ancient monument. Farmers can and do enter into management agreements with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, under which payments are made to help with the cost of the positive management of ancient monuments.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. May I ask for her reassurance that she will continue to keep an eye on the protection of such sites and the need for proper public access to them?

Mrs. Fenner: In applying our agricultural policy we take acount of other interests, including the protection of ancient monuments. To that end ADAS officers can help farmers to recognise the value of archaeological sites on their land and advise them on the most appropriate farming methods in use for protection of those sites. My hon. Friend mentioned access. The agreements with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, to which I have just referred, can provide for access but I understand that in practice very few do.

Pelagic Fisheries

13. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Minister of Ariculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the progress of the review of restrictive licensing of pelagic vessels.

Mr. Gummer: A consultative paper on the review of restrictive licensing for the pelagic fisheries was circulated to industry organisations on 4 October 1985. When all those who wish to do so have expressed their views, Fisheries Ministers hope to reach decisions on future licensing arrangements before the end of the year.

Mr. Wallace: Various people in the industry will be relieved that a statement will be made before the end of the year, because the uncertainty has not been good for the industry. Will the Minister accept that if any move is made to increase the number of freezer trawlers available for the pelagic fisheries, that will be viewed with great concern by those who are interested in conservation and particularly by people in my constituency, who will be adversely affected?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman will realise that the reason why we set up this investigation was do deal with all these issues. No decisions will be made without taking very seriously all the points that he has put forward.

Mr. Harris: With regard to conservation, has my hon. Friend seen the report in this week's *Fishing News* that two of the constituents of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) are buying a giant purser from Norway which has capacity in its hold for 1,100 tonnes of fish? Does he agree that it is pointless to buy a huge boat such as that if the owners then try to gain access to stocks that are under pressure?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept that there is considerable argument in this area, and that it was therefore sensible of the Government to make sure that we had the full facts before making our decision. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman may feel that it has taken some time, but it is better to get the answer right than to get a rushed answer wrong.

PRIME MINISTER

Klaus Barbie

Q1. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the recently published report "L'affreux Secret" by John Loftus, special investigator for the United States Justice Department, she will cause an investigation to be made into the connection of British Intelligence with the case of the Nazi Klaus Barbie.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I have been asked to reply. No, Sir.

Mr. Freeson: Why the secrecy in dealing with the facts of the matter? Is it not the case that Klaus Barbie was recruited by British intelligence as an agent immediately post-war, along with many other ex-SS spies who were recruited by MI6? Is it not the case that there may well be more facts to be elicited, or are we to have a cover-up such as there has been over Dr. Mengele?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman knows that there is a very strong tradition of reticence on these affairs, which has applied to Governments of all parties since the war. I cannot go any further in my reply than the answers that have hitherto been given.

Engagements

Q2. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

This morning my right hon. Friend presided at a meeting of the Cabinet, and is now in Brussels for President Reagan's briefing of the NATO Council.

Mrs. Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there will be a welcome throughout the length and breadth of the country for the achievements of the Geneva summit, particularly the agreement that arms control talks are to go ahead with vigour, that President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev are to meet again soon, and that the establishment of greater understanding and mutual trust is an essential basis for effective negotiation, with concentration on our shared hopes for the future rather than on our differences of the past?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that, in the context of high profile summitry, being a very hazardous form of diplomacy, there will be a great sense of relief at the achievements that have been secured at Geneva. My hon. Friend appropriately puts the advantages in a way that appeals to the entire House.

Dr. Owen: I warmly welcome the transformation in US-Soviet relations and hope that we may now see deep cuts in nuclear arsenals and concrete agreements in the next year and the year after. However, does the Leader of the House agree that one of the lessons for hon. Members is that the deeply damaging and divisive policies of unilateral nuclear disarmament should be abandoned by the Labour party?

Mr. Biffen: Whatever measure of detente has been secured at Geneva certainly does not derive from a unilateral nuclear disarmament philosophy.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. Friend utterly condemn the outrageous attack on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by badly behaved hooligans who call themselves Ulster Unionists, flying in the face of a growing reality that more and more people in the Province and in the rest of Britain are wholeheartedly behind the agreement?

Mr. Biffen: I deprecate, as I am sure all hon. Members will, the physical attack upon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I am certain that such action damages the cause of those who perpetrate it.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will the Lord Privy Seal ensure that the Prime Minister has brought to her attention the increasing flood of communications from the length and breadth of England, Wales and Scotland expressing indignation at the terms of the Anglo-Irish agreement and at her personal part in it?

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the observations that have just been made. Doubtless they will feature in the debate that we shall soon have.

Mr. Viggers: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the arrangements reached by President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in Geneva were firmly based on hard realism? Does he agree that that spirit, not the one-sided disarmament espoused by the Labour party and by one half of the alliance, is more likely to lead to arms control and lasting peace?

Mr. Biffen: Whatever success has been secured at Geneva will be in the context of realism that is both hard-headed and cautious. I am sure that it has been secured by hard negotiations unclouded by the sort of gesture politics that are implicit in the CND.

Q3. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Ross: Does the Lord Privy Seal recall the presentation made to the Cabinet by the Audit Commission

during the summer recess? Will he confirm that the presentation clearly revealed that local authorities were keeping their houses in order much better than were Government Departments? Will he take this opportunity to pay tribute to county and borough treasurers, who have had to bear with the Government's restrictions during the past five years?

Mr. Biffen: The Audit Commission plays an admirable role in the discussion about how best to maintain prudent public spending. I notice especially its endorsement of the idea that there should be museum charges and charges for other entertainment provided by municipal authorities. In broad terms, I am happy to concur with what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Couchman: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read reports that Mr. Ken Livingstone proposes to offer up to £5 million of GLC money to bail out the Trotskyist regime in Liverpool? Will he discuss urgently with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment ways of preventing this municipal embezzlement of London ratepayers' money?

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to concur with my hon. Friend's request, but he will have observed that Mr. Livingstone's exotic gesture does not seem to have succeeded.

Mrs. Renée Short: What does the Leader of the House suppose is the Prime Minister's attitude to the dire straits in which two more teaching hospitals in London find themselves? What advice is she likely to give to the patients who will not be admitted there and to the researchers whose work will not be finished?

Mr. Biffen: Those matters are the responsibility of the North-West Thames area health authority, which will have to judge its priorities within the spending disciplines to which it is subject. But, since I am asked to relate the matter to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I am sure she will observe that National Health Service spending has increased by 20 per cent. in real terms during the lifetime of this Government, that there are 58,000 more nurses and midwives and that waiting lists have decreased by 80,000 since 1979.

Q4. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend welcome the efforts of Mr. Eric Hammond in persuading the TUC to accept the use of Government funds for union ballots?

Mr. Biffen: Yes. I have no wish to prejudice the success of the Government's financing of strike ballots by warmly endorsing it to trade union leaders, but I suspect that there will be a growing recognition of the virtue of that legislation, just as Labour Members now realise that there is great virtue in the sale of council houses.

Q5. **Mr. Madden** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday, 21 November.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Madden: If low pay leads to the creation of new jobs, why is it that in Bradford, where most people in work have always been paid low wages, there are now 35,000 men and women desperately looking for work?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman had some compelling or demonstrable statistical information for that assertion he would have given it.

Q6. **Mr. Marland** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the youth training scheme is enormously well thought of, not only by those who are trained, but by the trainers and the job providers? The extension of the training period to two years is widely welcomed. However, there is some worry about the future funding of the scheme. Will my right hon. Friend use his best offices to ensure that future funding is kept to a maximum, so that the least well qualified who are currently on mode B will be affected as little as possible?

Mr. Biffen: The point that my hon. Friend raises is echoed in many quarters of the House. We have designed the funding of the two-year scheme to help mode B1 providers, so that they will be generally eligible for premium grants. Many will receive special transitional help next year.

Mr. Kinnock: Has the right hon. Gentleman seen the parliamentary answer from his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, which makes it clear that there will be a further cut over the next year of at least £135 million in the Government's captial allocation for housing, housebuilding and house improvement? Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that just last week the Prime Minister rather glibly claimed in the Guildhall that she saw a process of renewal taking place throughout the country? Does he think a cut in housebuilding adds to or retards that process of renewal?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will take account of the fact that the prospects for housebuilding relate not only to the allocations but to the local authorities' access to their own capital receipts. When these are taken in totality, it is the view of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that next year will show an increase over this year.

Mr. Kinnock: Does that mean that the right hon. Gentleman, at least, thinks that local authorities should be permitted to use more than 20 per cent. of the money raised by a variety of means that they want to dedicate to housing? Is he satisfied with the fact that we have the lowest housebuilding starts of any year since the war, that 250,000 building workers are unemployed and that young and old people are in desperate need of houses? If he is concerned about those things, will he use his influence to persuade the Government to change their policy, make those allocations, and allow local authorities to spend more on creating jobs and homes?

Mr. Biffen: It is the avowed policy of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that

decisions on allocations are taken in the context of the local authorities' access to capital receipts. There will be greater spending next year.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Has my right hon. Friend had time today to reflect on the increasing amount of damage being done to the education of our young people because of the continuing teachers' dispute? The National Union of Teachers has initiated a series of strikes in selected constituencies, including that of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley). Does my right hon. Friend agree that such action is counter-productive and is not the right way to seek to persuade Members of Parliament to support the teachers' cause? Surely negotiation and discussion is the right way forward.

Mr. Biffen: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. Many of the tactics being adopted will create an acrimony that will linger long after a settlement.

Q7. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Leader of the House unreservedly condemn the stubborn and self-serving attitude of the leaders of Liverpool city council, who this morning rejected the last olive branch to save their city from municipal bankruptcy? Will he ask his right hon. Friend to make recommendations immediately to the Court of Appeal, so that the date for the hearing of an appeal against disqualification can be brought forward? Even if the councillors are determined on kamikaze tactics for themselves, at least the people of Liverpool can be bailed out and given a chance to change political direction before it is too late.

Mr. Biffen: The breakdown of this morning's discussions was absolutely deplorable and can cause but further difficulties for the electors and citizens of Liverpool. The responsibility still remains with the city council to put its affairs in order, and it seems to me that the AMA and the Stonefrost reports show how that might be done. As to the possibility of the court action being accelerated, I am not clear what would be the status of my right hon. Friend in the matter, but I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's comments to him.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House if he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER — Second Reading of the Agriculture Bill.

Motion relating to the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations.

TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER AND WEDNESDAY 27 NOVEMBER — There will be a debate on a Government motion to approve the agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Republic of Ireland, November 1985 (Cmnd. 9657).

At the end on Tuesday, there will be a debate on a Government motion to take note of European Community Document No. 11118/83 as amended by 10681/84, a proposal for a directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons and the explanatory memoranda of the Department of Employment dated 12 January 1984 and 18 January 1985.

At the end on Wednesday, Second Reading of the Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill

THURSDAY 28 NOVEMBER — Second Reading of the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

FRIDAY 29 NOVEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Dockyards Services Bill.

Relevant European Documents

Debate on Tuesday 26 November

(a) 11118/83 Draft Directive on parental and family leave.

(b) 10681/84 Amended draft Directive on parental and family leave.

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 78-xxiii (1983-84) paragraph 1

(b) HC 5-viii (1984-85) paragraph 2

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that information. It appears that some satisfactory progress has been made at the Geneva summit and, naturally, we welcome that. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Prime Minister, on her return from Brussels, makes a statement reporting on that summit next week so that she may be appropriately questioned? Will he arrange a debate in the near future in the House on the matters relating to the summit so that hon. Members may have a proper opportunity to consider those matters?

May I again ask the right hon. Gentleman to arrange an early debate in Government time on the report of the Department of the Environment on the condition of disrepair of many hundreds of thousands of Britain's houses?

Can he give a date for the debate on the autumn statement? Unless that debate is held in the week after next at the latest, we shall find ourselves in the position of considering the matter even later than was the case last year.

I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his speech in the debate yesterday and I share his disappointment at the outcome. Will he accept the consolation from me that I agreed with everything he said, with the single exception that I thought that a decision in favour of televising the proceedings of the House would have been not a leap in the dark, as he described it, but definitely a leap into the light?

Mr. Biffen: To comment on that last point first, there is no one with whom I would be more happy to share disappointment than the Leader of the Opposition, especially as I believe that we shall both be sharing it for quite a while in the future.

I am fully cognisant of the point the hon. Gentleman made about the autumn statement. I understand that the Select Committee is currently taking evidence. I will look into the matter and see how speedily it can be brought before the House.

At present, the report on the state of the public housing stock is being discussed by the Department of the Environment with the local authority associations, but I will bear in mind the desire that it should be debated in the House.

I shall be in touch with the right hon. Gentleman through the usual channels about the possibility of the Prime Minister reporting, after her visit today, and, in that more general context, about the desirability of a foreign affairs debate.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the United Kingdom's continued adherence to the European Convention on Human Rights?

Mr. Biffen: I answered in a somewhat negative fashion when that question was put to me in the recent past, and I see no prospect in the near future of a debate in Government time. However, one of my hon. Friends might like to try his hand on the Adjournment.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Given the right hon. Gentleman's statement to the House this time last week that the would look at contingency plans for what might happen in the event of services collapsing in Liverpool, in view of the failure today of the city council's leaders to accept the compromise plan put forward by the AMA, and given the failure of the Leader of the Opposition to convince the leaders of Liverpool city council to see sense, when will the Government come forward with plans to ensure that services to 500,000 people do not collapse in ruin?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman has identified yet one more area of disappointment for the Leader of the Opposition. I take note of what he says, but I can say no more today than I said a week ago.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): As Leader of the House, is my right hon. Friend really satisfied with a situation whereby the enactments of this House are subject to veto by the European Court of Human Rights?

Mr. Biffen: That is a situation in which we find ourselves by virtue of treaty obligations.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Given the critical situation in Liverpool, bearing in mind that the workers there will today get their final wage packets, and given that schools will be closed and rubbish will pile up in the streets, not to mention the possibility of problems on the streets, will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, even at this

eleventh hour, whether he will meet the leaders of Liverpool city council? If not, will he arrange for a special debate next week so that hon. Members can debate these problems—*[Interruption.]* It is all very well for Liberal and Conservative Members to shout about the situation in Liverpool, but if they saw the conditions there they would realise the position that the Labour council faces.

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's real interest in this topic and, indeed, in the Adjournment debate held last week. I shall refer his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, but I can offer no promise of a debate next week. Even at this late hour, it is time that the council leaders assumed the responsibilities that at present they are abdicating so manifestly.

Mr Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that last Session's Bill on corporal punishment—which must be one of the daftest measures ever to have been put before this House—has been dropped indefinitely?

Mr. Biffen: I can take refuge in saying that, whatever has happened to it, it will not be next week.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Leader of the House read the report from the Privileges Committee dealing with confidentiality of Select Committee minutes and deliberations? Does he not recognise, particularly in the light of the most recent leaks, that there is a need to debate this matter so that the House can be clear in mind about what is acceptable and unacceptable? Will he make sure that time is made available to debate this?

Mr. Biffen: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. I was in the Chair in relation to that report, and he is the first hon. Member to have drawn attention to it. I should like to reflect for a little while before I judge how widespread the insistence is for a debate.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for a Law Officer to intervene in next week's debate on the Anglo-Irish agreement and to deal with the question of its status? After all, it is described as an international treaty to be registered at the United Nations. But international treaties are treaties between sovereign states, and in this country only the Queen has treaty-making power. The Government may commit only themselves and are not able to describe themsleves, as the agreement does, as a sovereign Government. Is not a possible solution to this problem the fact that the Government of the Republic cannot bind their successor and the Republic of Ireland in any event? If so, is not the agreement worthless?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend will appreciate that I cannot give the categorical undertaking that he seeks, but I shall do my utmost to see that the point that he raises is dealt with in the debate.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): During the debate on Tuesday and Wednesday, will the right hon. Gentleman ask one of his colleagues to address himself to a specific problem confronting me and other hon. Members, particularly those from Northern Ireland, to do with the legislative procedure for dealing with Northern Ireland affairs? Will the Anglo-Irish conference produce proposals for draft orders, and, if it does and we make representations in the House, will they have go go back to the conference for approval before they become draft orders? If they become draft orders and we in the House make further proposals, and the Government reconsider on the basis of our proposals, will they once again go back to the Anglo-Irish conference for endorsement? If that is the procedure, does it not mean that elected Members of Parliament for Northern Ireland are redundant?

Mr. Biffen: I shall do my utmost to see that that point is dealt with in the debate.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Bearing in mind that Kent has 16 Members while Northern Ireland has 17, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that there will be time to discuss the fixed link in proper form, as this is a matter of great concern not only to the country but to the people of Kent?

Mr. Biffen: As I understand it, on Friday 29 November, there is a possibility of a debate related entirely to Kent. My hon. Friend may be lucky on that occasion, and if he is unlucky we shall look at the matter again.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Is the Leader of the House aware that many Ayrshire farmers had their crops devastated by the appalling weather during the summer and are now facing bankruptcy? Is he also aware that the Minister of State, Scottish Office promised an announcement about aid at the end of October, but no such statement has been forthcoming? Is he also aware that my colleagues from Ayrshire and I saw the Minister earlier this month, and he told us that a statement would be made as soon as possible, but still one has not been made, even though today there were questions to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food? When will a statement be made so that the Ayrshire farmers will know whether they will be able to continue in farming?

Mr. Biffen: I understand tht my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said this afternoon that he hoped to make a statement shortly. In any case, I shall draw his attention to what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend will recall that previously I have asked for time to be found for a full in-depth debate on law and order. The way in which my postbag on this subject increases shows that there is disquiet over the question of juries, the possibility of hooded jurors, the parole system and the lenient sentencing that we now have, which means that there is no reason for the Government to duck a debate on this subject.

Mr. Biffen: It is not that we are ducking but that we are having difficulty in finding time. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's point, although he must be a little more fair than that. Many demands are made for debates in Government time, and hon. Members like to have a tolerable Christmas recess. However, I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's request.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Last Thursday, I asked the Leader of the House whether we could have a debate on the independent colliery review procedures for the closure of pits which have been announced only recently by the Secretary of State for Energy. The right

[Mr. John Ryman]

hon. Gentleman promised that he would have a word with the Secretary of State about this, in view of the difficulties experienced by all parties to the deals. What is the result of his conversation with the Secretary of State for Energy? When I spoke to the Secretary of State's private office, I was told that it did not have the faintest idea how the procedure worked.

Mr. Biffen: I hope to be in touch with the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): If it is in order for the House to debate the treaty of the Anglo-Irish agreement, why is it not in order for the House to debate the treaty of the European Convention on Human Rights when this country is so often wrongly held up to ridicule in the rest of the world?

Mr. Biffen: It is not a question of whether it is in order; it is simply that I have not been able to make Government time available.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Instead of having two days' debate on the agreement, would it not be a good idea to set aside a day for the workings of the Housing Defects Act, which the Government introduced some time ago? Nearly every council has found the Act to be unworkable. The local authorities are called upon to devise a repair scheme for the houses, but that is not properly designated under the Act. Is it not high time that a spokesman from the Department of the Environment told the House in forthright terms what authorities must do in order to alleviate the misery of thousands of tenants and residents?

Mr. Biffen: I strongly repudiate any suggestion that the Anglo-Irish agreement merits less than two days' debate in this House. It is of profound significance to the United Kingdom as a whole and a matter of acute sensitivity to the Province of Northern Ireland. As to the hon. Member's suggested replacement, of course it is true that we were to have a debate which would enable the Government to put their record on renovation and repair. It is so formidably effective compared with that undertaken by the Labour Government that I am much tempted by the prospect, but I do not have that amount of Government time.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend give further consideration to what I believe was a reasonable request from my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) for a debate on law and order? Bearing in mind the growing anxiety felt not just within the House but throughout the country about the completely inadequate sentences being meted out to rapists and baby killers, it is time that the House had an opportunity to voice its opinion on the important matters of law and order and sentences.

Mr. Biffen: I accept at once the importance of the topic and my hon. Friend's commitment to it. Being fair-minded, he will, I am sure, judge that we have only recently completed the debate upon the Queen's Speech when it was possible for the House to discuss it. It is a matter of balancing all the other demands on Government time with this request.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is the Leader of the House aware that there will have to be a debate, or a statement, in the House next week on the position in Liverpool, because it has reached crisis proportions? One aspect that must be debated and upon which we need a statement is how the DHSS will deal with all the staff who will be made redundant. For instance, on Monday the manual workers sign on and on Thursday the white-collar workers. No arrangements have been made to deal with them. The office of the Minister for Social Security told me today that it does not know in which category they will be — they are not redundant and they are not sacked; they may not get paid; benefit books will not in any case be issued until after Christmas, and each case will have to go before an assessment panel. That kind of hardship must be addressed by the House. Will the right hon. Gentleman arrange for a statement to be made?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises points which are fair for the consideration of the House. Of course, I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to what he has said, but my right hon. Friend is not automatically engaged by the cynical disavowal of responsibility by the Liverpool council's leadership.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): When we discuss the Channel link, will my right hon. Friend take care to ensure that the House has an opportunity to debate all the viable alternatives and is not faced by a Government who gives us just one option on a take-it-or-leave-it basis?

Mr. Biffen: I have already said that I hope that we shall be able to have a debate on that topic in the reasonably near future. I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's point when considering the form that the debate should take.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): Further to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) about a statement from the Secretary of State for Energy on the colliery review procedure, may I press upon the Leader of the House the fact that it is important that we should have that statement and a clear sign of what the new colliery review procedure is all about? A colliery in Ogmore is now under that new colliery review procedure and awaiting a decision. The community of Maesteg is waiting for a decision. A further colliery in Garw is under the review procedure. They are the only two collieries left in the Ogmore constituency. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the meeting that he is to have with the Secretary of State for Energy will be an early one and that the House will have an early statement about the review procedure?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's argument and his constituency involvement. I shall ensure that the facts as he has described them are put to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): We have had, rightly, a series of statements on the effects of the teachers' strike on teachers' pay and other matters. May we have an early statement on the effect that the strike is having upon children who are sitting examinations and children who are sent home without notice? Is it not time that the House considered the extremely damaging effect of the strike on children's education?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree with me that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science made his views and anxieties on this aspect of the teachers' strike extremely clear at

Question Time a short while ago. However, I shall draw to his attention the further points that my hon. Friend makes.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): May I lend my support to Tory Members who are calling for a debate on law and order in the context of a letter which was sent by the chairman of the stock exchange to the Prime Minister three weeks ago on the enormous mountains of fraud in the Tory citadels in the City? Will the Leader of the House arrange a special debate on law and order in the context of that fraud and the Government's failure to deal with it?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman properly reminds the House how widely such a debate might range. If I am unable to provide time for such a debate as speedily as he wishes, I hope that he will not throw aside his potential speech. The House will have an opportunity to consider all these matters when it addresses itself to the financial services legislation, which will be forthcoming reasonably soon.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that Her Majesty's Government expect Spain and Portugal to come into the EEC on 1 January? Will he confirm also that the matter has not been debated by the House, except for my Adjournment debate, since 1978? Surely a matter of such major importance to the British people should receive the fullest possible treatment in the House. Will he confirm that a full opportunity will be given to all Members to debate the issue and to vote upon it? Will that happen between now and Christmas?

Mr. Biffen: I congratulate my hon. Friend on being one of the relatively few Members who have persistently argued the utmost significance of the entry of Spain and Portugal into the EEC for the United Kingdom and its economy. I can confirm that legislation which is now in another place should be before us for consideration and confirmation between now and Christmas.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Why will the Government not put a day aside to debate the recent survey into the state of disrepair of many council homes? The survey showed that 84 per cent. of these homes are in disrepair and that £18·8 billion would have to be spent to bring them up to a reasonable standard? Do the Government choose not to have a debate because they are as windy about their record as these homes are draughty?

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate that the political argument is shifting away from unemployment to housing, but housing will be as hopeless an area for the Opposition as unemployment has been. As I said to the Leader of the Opposition, the report is being discussed by the Department of the Environment with the local authority associations. I accept that it should be debated eventually in the House.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern that is felt on both sides of the House about the proposed bid by Elders IXL for Allied-Lyons, which may damage a number of constituencies' employment prospects, including those of Leicester, East? Will my right hon. Friend give the House an opportunity to debate the growing abuse of companies spending massive amounts of shareholders' money in launching takeover campaigns? Will he consider referring this particular bid to the Office of Fair Trading, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

Mr. Biffen: I admire the ingenuity with which my hon. Friend draws to my attention the problems of Leicester, East every Thursday afternoon. No one is a more doughty champion of the east midlands and Leicester than he—*[Interruption.]* I know how to butter my bread. The specific issue which my hon. Friend has raised is being considered by the Office of Fair Trading, and there I think the matter must rest for the time being.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for one of his right hon. Friends to be present on Tuesday to explain to the House—in the light of Dr. Garret FitzGerald's claim that with the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement, the role of the UDR has been significantly changed—what part will be played by the representatives of a foreign country in the direct control of a regiment of the British Army? Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that it is because it is a regiment of the British Army that enmity has been displayed against it, notably in the past week with the murder of another Roman Catholic serving soldier—a sergeant—in Londonderry?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's point, especially in the context of the Province. As I have said in answer to similar questions, I shall draw the hon. Member's points to the attention of those Ministers taking part in the debate in the belief that they will deal with them.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his answer to the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) on whether in the near future the House should consider the position in Liverpool? There are 31,000 employees in the city, most of whom do not live there, who are the innocent victims of the intransigent attitude of the militant Left in control of the city council. If my right hon. Friend does not consider that a debate is appropriate, will he pass on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment the information that most hon. Members are extremely worried about the position in Liverpool and would like a statement to be made?

Mr. Biffen: I shall of course pass on that point to my right hon. Friend. I should like to append this observation: wilful abdication by the Liverpool council does not necessarily involve Government responsibility.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Most of us accept that the decision taken last night on televising Parliament means that it is unlikely that there will be television cameras within these precincts before the next election. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, as is often the case, Scottish Members showed that they are more progressive and sensible than the rest of the House by 47 Members from Scotland voting for television, 17 voting against and one, for some reason, voting in both Lobbies? Will the Leader of the House consider the possibility of televising the meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh?

Mr. Biffen: I am still a bit dazed after last night. If I may collect my thoughts, I think that my instinctive comment is, how can I be guaranteed that English money will not be used to televise Scots politicians?

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does my right hon. Friend accept that parents and grandparents are extremely angry following a summer when children have been neglected—a summer of cruelty to children, rape, manslaughter and murder? It was a distressing summer for anyone who loves small children. Will my right hon. Friend take seriously the calls from Back Benchers to hold an urgent debate on this subject so that we can explore in depth how we may better protect children? The events of this summer must not be repeated. Parliament should enact legislation to protect children. May we have an early debate on this matter?

Mr. Biffen: I take account of what my hon. Friend has said. I have already said to the House that I fully understand the importance of this subject and the passion that it engenders. What I cannot do is to offer the prospect of an early debate — having regard to all the other pressures on Government time—but I take note of what has been said and shall ascertain what can be done.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Leader of the House may be aware of the controversy in greater Manchester about the decision of the chief constable to purchase plastic bullets. It is my constituents who are likely to be affected by the decision should the bullets ever be used. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is an overwhelming argument that the relationship between the police and the community in the inner city areas should be open to the scrutiny of Parliament? That changing relationship should at least have the benefit of the collective wisdom of the House. May we have a debate on the policing of England and Wales?

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will permit me to comment on the merits of his proposal. I should have thought that now, of all times, was not the occasion further to politicise the police of this country. However, I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Leader of the House answered a question from the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) about our having an early debate on the serious issue of child abuse. May I point out to the right hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend that such a debate will take place on Friday 29 November, initiated, dare I say, by myself?

Mr. Biffen: I am more than happy to join the hon. Gentleman in giving publicity to the debate, which will be the first on Friday 29 November. He is right to say that it will give an excellent opportunity to all those who have sought to have a debate on the topic.

Liverpool

4.2 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the impending collapse of services in the city of Liverpool".

I take this opportunity to raise the matter because I believe that on Monday it would be convenient, without any major disruption to our business, to move the debates to later in the week, without interfering with the important debate on Tuesday and Wednesday on Northern Ireland. I believe that the matter should take precedence over business that has already been laid down, for specific, important and urgent reasons — specifically because Government intervention is the only solution available. It is clear that every other attempt to resolve the matter, involving the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the Leader of the Opposition and many other people, has broken down.

The matter is important because it is a unique problem. It is a tragic first for a city the size of Liverpool, and it is a tragic first for any local authority. The matter is urgent because unless the House acts, 500,000 citizens living in Liverpool will be left without services and 31,000 employees will find themselves without employment and without money coming into their homes to look after their families' welfare. It is also urgent because schools will close and young children will have no opportunity to complete their education. Social services will cease to function and meals on wheels, home helps and a variety of welfare services will not be available——

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Alton: Those services will not be available, especially to elderly people, in a city where one in four is over retirement age and where the fastest growing group are the over-80s. From a hygiene point of view, there will be major public health problems when the refuse services break down. No contingency plans exist. The Government have not considered the matter, as the Leader of the House made clear earlier. It is a contrived crisis that is now out of control.

The people in Liverpool feel akin to those in the first world war who were caught in a no man's land with belligerent and incompetent generals in the trenches on either side, hurling invective and abuse at one another. Ordinary people are now being made the victims. One in five of the people in Liverpool is already out of work. Liverpool has more than its fair share of problems. This is an urgent matter, which should be properly debated next week.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the impending collapse of services in the city of Liverpool"

I do not under-estimate what the hon. Gentleman has said, I have listened with great care to his submission. He knows that my sole duty in considering an application

under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or for Monday.

I regret that I cannot find that the matter that he raised meets all the criteria laid down under the Standing Order, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House on this day.

Divisions

4.5 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise with you, Mr. Speaker, a point of order of which I have given you notice. Will you consider, and make a statement upon, any action which you deem it necessary to take to enable Members already in a Division Lobby with the intention of voting on a closure motion to become aware that the Division has been called off and the main Question is to be put? The problem arises because hon. Members who are already in a Division Lobby cannot hear what is happening in the Chamber and will tend to interpret the initial ringing of the Division Bell on the main Question as being the second ringing of the Division Bell on the original closure motion when it is called off.

There is a simple way of overcoming that problem. Coloured lights could be installed in the Division Lobbies where they can be seen by all hon. Members. They should be illuminated for two minutes after a Division is called off. That is the course that I judge to be most convenient for hon. Members and the efficient conduct of the business of the House.

I believe that my memory serves me right that when it was thought convenient to install two digital clocks in the Chamber there was no investigation by the Select Committee on Procedure. It was an obvious and convenient step, and I believe that this is a step that you could properly take, Mr. Speaker, within your own authority since it involves a change not in procedure, but merely in mechanical facilities, and that there is no need to refer it to the Select Committee.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving notice of his point of order. The confusion that occurred last night which led me to put the Question again is not unprecedented, but it is rare and I should like to consider carefully, in that context, what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It would be dramatic to have the psychedelic effects that the hon. Gentleman suggests but would not a simpler solution be to put monitors in the Division Lobbies?

Mr. Speaker: That is exactly what I should like to consider.

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware, several hon. Members attended the magnificent performance of Monteverdi's vespers last night in aid of your fund for the restoration of St. Margaret's Church. By arrangement, we left St. Margaret's at 9.50 pm to record our vote in the important Division. I went through the Aye Lobby at the correct time, not on the procedural motion when the Division was called off, but on the main Question. On looking at *Hansard* this morning, I find that my name is not recorded as having voted.

I therefore ask for two things: first, that the record be put right; and, secondly, that, in view of the confusion and the possibility of other names having been omitted—some names that I expected to see are not in the list—there be a recount.

Mr. Speaker: If what the hon. Gentleman says is right — I am sure it is — I shall ensure that his name is recorded as having voted among the Ayes. On the second point, I have taken account of what the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) has said, that the figures may show a discrepancy of one in the names and the count. I cannot accede to the second request.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It might be helpful to know what caused the problem last night. It arose from the fact that it was not whipped business. With great respect to those hon. Members who acted as tellers and then were not found for the closure motion but were in place for the main Question, they were not professional Whips and they had no control, so to speak. When things alter in the Chamber during Government business or whipped business, the Whips get into position to inform people in the Lobbies and the procedure goes through smoothly. Last night we had good amateur Whips, who caused confusion because of their lack of experience.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that the usual channels will be heartened by the hon. Gentleman's support of them.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday there was a double confusion. There were hon. Members in the Aye Lobby who genuinely thought that they were voting on the procedural motion, but also hon. Members who thought that they were voting on the substantive motion, who voted, like the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), and then immediately repaired to whatever task they were performing outside the House. If you are going to correct the voting register to take account of the hon. Gentleman's vote and his subsequent absence, surely I am right to assume that other hon. Members may have been similarly affected. If so, does it not put the validity of the vote in considerable difficulty?

Mr. Speaker: I cannot agree with the right hon. Gentleman. There may have been a discrepancy of one, and, as the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) has mentioned that he passed through the Lobby, that might be how it was caused. On the right hon. Gentleman's second point, he will know perfectly well because he was present that, because of the confusion, I caused the Division on the main motion to take place again. We cannot have yet a further Division.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I apologise to you and my colleagues if I caused any confusion last night? When the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) sat down three minutes before the hour of interruption and I rose, I should have made it plain that I intended to resume my seat on the hour of interruption, so that we would have a clean Division. I did not do so, and I apologise if I caused any confusion as a result. The hon. Lady chose to move the closure a minute after that, and that is how the difficulty arose. If it was in any way my fault, I apologise to the House.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Today two Liberal Members raised the critical position of Liverpool. Is that not hypocritical, as many of Liverpool's problems arose when the Liberal party was in control with the Conservatives——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The point of order must be one that I can answer.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to the earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. On big occasions such as last night, you can be placed in some difficulty. Several related incidents caused the problem, one of which towards the end concerned the Prime Minister. Many Tory Members——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am always grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support, but I am not responsible for the Prime Minister or for how she casts her vote. The point of order must be one on which I can rule.

Mr. Skinner: The point that I am coming to is that I do not want you to be placed in that predicament again, Mr. Speaker. If we have to have a recount, which may be a possibility if all those hon. Members did not vote when they should have done, it would be helpful if the Prime Minister could tell us beforehand how she will vote because last night Tory Members were chasing from one Lobby to another asking, "Which Lobby has she gone in? Let me follow her."

Orders of the Day

Armed Forces Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.14 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): I beg to move, that the Bill be now read a Second time.

The main aim of the Bill is to continue in force for a further five years the Army Act 1955, the Air Force Act 1955 and the Naval Discipline Act 1957. Without such legislation those Acts would all lapse at the end of 1986 at the latest, with consequences for the armed forces that would, at the very least, be unpredictable. At the same time, we are taking the opportunity to revise and improve the Acts where necessary in order to keep the rules regulation service discipline as closely in line with those applicable to civilians as is possible, but taking into account the special circumstances of military life.

I shall highlight the main clauses in the Bill. The House will recall that the present procedure was instituted in 1955 when the Army and Air Force Acts were enacted. those Acts were made for five years' maximum duration, subject to annual continuation orders after the affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament. In 1971 the Naval Discipline Act, hitherto a permanent Act, became subject to the same procedure. Clause 1 of the Bill provides for the three Acts to continue for up to five years, subject to Parliament approving annual continuation orders as previously.

Clauses 2 and 3 are necessary to keep sevice law abreast of developments in technology. Clause 2 creates a new offence of intentionally interfering with or impairing the efficiency of service equipment, or of modifying or interfering with signals being received or transmitted by such equipment.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the Minister agree that clause 2, as drafted, creates the equivalent of a criminal damage charge and, because of the intention, provides the maximum penalty of life imprisonment? Does he agree that that is well out of line with civilian law?

Mr. Stanley: We can pursue in Committee the appropriateness of the maximum penalty. The hon. Gentleman is right to refer to it as the maximum penalty because it is, but obviously there is no obligation to impose the maximum penalty. We shall cetainly be happy to develop further our thinking as to why that particular maximum penalty is appropriate.

Clause 2 also makes it an offence to do something which is likely to produce the results that I mentioned. The clause is designed primarily to cover interference with computers in ways that might not constitute actual physical damage—for example, the unauthorised alteration of a computer's program. At present, it is an offence under service law to damage public or service property, and in those circumstances compensation can be recovered from the offender's pay. However, it is far from clear that the sections creating this offence would cover the type of interference short of damage that might take place. Given the high degree of reliance within the armed forces on computers for both operational and administrative purposes, it is clear that such interference could have potentially serious results, and must carry an appropriate penalty.

Clause 3 amends the provisions of the services' discipline Acts concerning the offences which can be committed in relation to official documents. Like Clause 2, this clause also reflects advances in technology. Its main aim is to make it clear that official documents comprise not only written ledgers and papers, but include computer programs and also all other present-day means of recording data, such as photographs, tapes, disks, and films.

Clause 7 removes the three-year time limit within which proceedings under service law must commence. The time limit applies to almost all offences under service law, whether before a court martial, a standing civilian court or in summary proceedings. Although in the general criminal law certain statutes impose time limits for proceedings on certain specified offences, no general time limit exists in criminal law equivalent to the three-year limit on service proceedings. The three-year restriction has caused some difficulties in the past—for example, in fraud cases where the offence has not come to light for some time and the complexity of the case has meant lengthy preparation before it could come to court. We are therefore proposing to abolish the general three-year time limit, but where there is a specific time limit applying to any particular indictable offence, the time limit will equally apply in service law. I should also make it clear that there is no question of reviving cases where the three-year time limit has already expired.

Some parts of the service discipline Acts apply in certain circumstances to civilians overseas — for example, when they are employed by or serve the armed forces or when they are family members or employees residing with someone who is himself subject to service law. Offences committed by such civilians may be dealt with by court martial or by summary proceedings, or, in the case or military and air force law, by standing civilian courts in north-west Europe. It is our firm aim to ensure that the provisions in service law governing civilians are as close as possible to those governing civilians in courts in the United Kingdom. Clauses 9, 10 and 11 make certain changes to achieve that.

Clause 9 empowers standing civilian courts to defer sentence on a civilian for up to six months — for example, to allow the offender a chance to prove his good behaviour in the intervening period. It also sets out the powers and procedures for re-arrest should this prove necessary. To enable standing civilian courts to defer sentence—something that they are unable to do now—will be a useful extra facility for matching sentences to the circumstances of individual cases, and, as I have already said, will match the power that has already been granted to civilian courts in the United Kingdom.

Clause 10 deals with service community supervision orders. These orders can at present be imposed under service law on young civilian offenders, but only on those under 21 years of age. They have no single direct equivalent in the civilian courts in the United Kingdom, but they contain elements of probation, community service and supervision orders. Service community supervision orders require the offender to perform a certain amount of useful work and also put him or her in touch with a professional social worker. However, service courts

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overseas regularly deal with offenders who are over rather than under the age of 21. Many of these cases are concerned with offences of dishonesty, when the offenders are often experiencing some form of domestic or personal upset. A service community supervision order would often be an appropriate sentence in such cases.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Presumably a service man serving one of these sentences does not get paid, nor does his wife; is that correct?

Mr. Stanley: These are sentences that might be imposed on civilians serving with the services overseas — for example, a member of a service man's family serving with him on an accompanied posting overseas.

Dr. Glyn: But paid by the Army.

Mr. Stanley: The service man is paid by the services and a civilian is paid by the services if employed by them.

Dr. Glyn: But they are paid by the services?

Mr. Stanley: Yes, in some circumstances. We are referring to relatively minor offences. I do not believe that there would be any stoppage of pay. If I am wrong, I shall write to my hon. Friend.

There is no upper age limit in criminal law for probation or community service orders in the civil courts in the United Kingdom, and there appears to be no justification for retaining the limit of 21 for service community supervision orders. Clause 10, therefore, empowers courts martial and standing civilian courts to impose such orders on civilians, regardless of age. I hope the House will agree that this extra flexibility is sensible.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): May we assume that, in considering these actions, the Minister will take account of the travesty of the Cyprus case in which great reliance was placed on confessions? Will he confirm that in peace time the natural rights of legal representation will apply to members of the armed forces and their dependants under both military and civil law?

Mr. Stanley: As the hon. Gentleman will recall, if he was in the House when I made my statement on 9 Signals Regiment, I said the requirements that are imposed on the service police authorities should be in accordance with the judges' rules, which are the standard rules for interviews. It is a clear obligation upon them. I can make no further comment on that case until Mr. David Calcutt has completed his inquiry.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Can the Minister inform us of the timetable for Mr. Calcutt's inquiry?

Mr. Stanley: I regret to say that that is not possible. Mr. Calcutt has started his inquiry and, as the hon. Gentleman will know, he has been asked to complete it as quickly as is practicable. The length of time taken is a matter for him. He has started quickly and is most anxious to bring his report to as rapid a conclusion as he can, commensurate with the important duties that he has to discharge.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, West): Can my right hon. Friend assure me that those who serve on courts martials or civil courts are fully aware that no prejudice should be shown towards an officer or a rating who is legally represented?

Mr. Stanley: I should be surprised if any such prejudice entered the minds on anybody presiding in a courts martial or civilian court. It would be contrary to natural justice and the independence of the court if any account were taken of a person who is professionally represented. I have received no complaints on that score.

Clause 11 deals with punishments available to service courts for those under the age of 17. At present, unless a young person under 17 commits a very serious offence, which in the case of an adult would be punishable in the Crown court by imprisonment for 14 years or more, the only punishment available to a service court is the imposition of a reception order under which he or she would be transferred into care in the United Kingdom and perhaps be kept in care until reaching the age of 18 or 19.

I do not wish to give the impression that there is much serious crime amongst young people with service families overseas. Nevertheless, there has been a small number of cases where the service authorities were not satisfied that appropriate powers were available to deal with more serious crimes, particularly crimes of violence, committed by those under 17. Clause 11 seeks to rectify that problem. It allows the imposition of custodial orders on young men of 15 or 16 for not more than a total of 12 months. Such sentences would be served in the same United Kingdom detention or youth custody centres to which young civilian offenders of the same age are sent by United Kingdom courts if sentenced under detention centre or youth custody orders. I assure the House that under our proposals, which go no further than the equivalent provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1982, such young offenders will be in no way disadvantaged by being dealt with under service rather than United Kingdom criminal law.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister agree that there appears to be a little inconsistency because we are talking about young persons in the families of service men abroad? Will he explain why there should be a distinction between a son and a daughter?

Mr. Stanley: I shall refer back to the primary legislation on the civilian side. I understand that the provision reflects accurately the provision that applies in the civil courts. I believe I am right in saying that these forms of custodial sentences apply to males rather than to females. That is the basis upon which the legislation has been constructed. There is an attempt to keep in line with civilian legislation. I shall examine the matter further. If I need to correct what I have said or to elaborate upon it, I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister has indicated that the sentences would be served in the same institutions as if the young people had been sentenced by a United Kingdom court. Does he accept that if the children of service families stationed abroad are put in a place of detention or custody in the United Kingdom they will not be in the same country as their parents and opportunities for visiting will be fewer? Does he not regard that additional penalty as somewhat harsh?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman will realise that there might not be an appropriate place of detention in the overseas country where the individual could serve the sentence. The hon. Gentleman may reflect that it might be preferable for the young person to serve the sentence in the United Kingdom where other relatives or members of the

family would have ready access rather than to be placed in an unsatisfactory detention or custodial environment in the overseas country. Before a standing civilian court would reach such a conclusion, it would no doubt consider closely the issue of access by the accused person's family. The court would doubtless take that into account.

Mr. Sayeed: If the legislation is passed, will my right hon. Friend consider the posting back to this country of the member of the armed forces whose child is incarcerated in the United Kingdom gaol?

Mr. Stanley: There is always provision in our management of the services to deal with the postings of individual service men or women on compassionate grounds. That factor can always be taken into account in such circumstances.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have made important points that we shall want to consider further. I want to underline what I said previously about a small number of cases being involved. Happily, the number of occasions when these provisions are likely to be used is very small.

Clause 13 is primarily the result of a recommendation made by the Select Committee which examined the Armed Forces Act 1981. That Act gave certain officers the power to make place of safety orders where children overseas are considered to be at risk. Where there was a longer-term problem which could not be solved within the currency of the service place of safety order, it was the intention that the children should be transferred administratively back to the United Kingdom and into the care of the local welfare authorities, and that has happened in a small number of cases. However, the 1981 Select Committee asked us to consider giving statutory backing to such transfers to the United Kingdom. We agree that this should be done. Clause 13 therefore provides the necessary statutory authority for the transfer. It further allows the service place of safety order to run for up to 24 hours after the child has arrived at the place of safety in the United Kingdom to allow time for the local welfare authorities to make the necessary arrangements to receive the child.

Mr. Bermingham: I welcome the clause. It is a sensible provision in the interests of children. One small matter does not seem to be covered by Army, Navy or Air Force regulations. When a place of safety order is being made, it is important that the child should be represented by a guardian ad litem or a legal representative so that the child's cause may be put either to the officer making the place of safety order in the overseas country or to the juvenile court on the child's return to the United Kingdom. Will the Minister consider the further protection of the child's interests in that way?

Mr. Stanley: I shall be glad to examine the question of representation. I hope that, either within the regulations or by way of administrative practice, proper provision for representation can be made. That is necessary and right in the child's interests. I should like to respond further to the hon. Gentleman. I may be able to do so when I close the debate, with the leave of the House. If not, I shall write to him.

So that we keep the issue of service children at risk in perspective, the House will be glad to know that in the period from June 1984 to September 1985, only four place of safety orders were made on service children. Nevertheless, despite the small scale of the problem, it is imperative that the interests of such children, and indeed of their families, are protected. The 1981 Act laid the foundations of a system which has worked well in the few cases which have so far arisen, but it is clear that some improvements could be made. I hope the House will agree that clause 13 represents a useful contribution in this important area of service law.

Clause 14, which is the last provision I shall highlight, deals with a rather different problem concerning service women in the Regular forces. Part I of the Army Act 1955 contains a number of provisions relating to service in the Regular Reserve at the end of a period of Regular Army service. However, the Army Act currently precludes such provisions from applying to service women. The effect is that, to all intents and purposes, it is not possible to impose a compulsory Reserve liability on service women in the same way as is the case with men.

Service women now fill many vital roles in the Army, and in some of these important areas there are shortages in the Reserves. One solution to such shortages is to make provision for women to be obliged to accept a Reserve liability on the same terms as their male counterparts when they join the Army. The purpose of clause 14 is to allow this to happen. The main impact will be on new entrants with skills in the areas of shortages in the Reserves, but some existing service women may also be invited to accept a Reserve liability. There is, of course, no question of obliging existing service women to accept such a liability; in their case it will be on a purely voluntary basis.

To complete the picture, I should explain that statutory provision already exists to enable a Reserve liability to be placed on RAF airwomen. This has not hitherto been imposed, but a statutory instrument will shortly be laid before the House for an amendment to RAF Terms of Service Regulations in this respect and from next year such a liability will be imposed. The Navy has no requirement to impose a Reserve liability on its service women; it prefers in time of emergency to rely on redeploying existing service women and on the services of the Women's Naval Volunteer Reserves.

For the rest, the Bill consists largely of amendments designed to correct minor deficiencies in the service discipline Acts which have become obvious since the last review in 1981. As many of these are highly technical, I do not intend to go over them in detail at this moment. There will, of course, be ample opportunity to discuss these in Committee.

Lastly, I turn to the matters raised by the 1981 Select Committee which the Committee asked to be considered for the 1986 Bill. The Government's response to all these matters has been given in the intervening debates on the annual continuation order, with the exception of three. I shall now respond to the three matters that are outstanding.

First, the 1981 Select Committee asked us to give further consideration to the definition of "the enemy" in the context of the death penalty provision in the service dicipline Acts. We have reviewed that definition at length and in great detail. We have concluded, however, that all the alternative definitions are less satisfactory than the present definition. Indeed, we have found that nearly all the alternative definitions would be likely to define "the enemy" with less precision and could therefore widen the prospective ambit of the death penalty which would be contrary to the 1981 Select Committee's intentions. I assure the House that we have given the matter very

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careful consideration, but we have not been able to devise a definition that would constitute an improvement on the one now on the statute book.

Secondly, the 1981 Select Committee asked the Department to consider altering the composition of courts martial to include those below commissioned rank. This question was, of course, thoroughly reviewed by the Lewis committee in 1946, which concluded that such a proposal would not tend to improve the quality of the court nor the prospect or appearance of justice being done. We have now carefully considered the matter once again, but can find no grounds for departing from the conclusions of the Lewis report.

Moreover, there is no evidence of any desire from within any of the three services for the composition of courts martial to be altered in this way. As hon. Members on both sides of the House will be aware, one of the greatest strengths of our armed forces is that they are managed in small units — the ship, the battalion, the squadron. This ensures that, if there is a significant complaint or anxiety, it is known about rapidly and, certainly in my experience, at a very senior level. It is clear from our continuous contact with service men and service women that there is no pressure for the composition of courts martial to be extended to those below commissioned rank. Indeed, I believe that the present system of courts martial and summary proceedings enjoys a very high degree of confidence from those in the services at all ranks.

Mr. Bermingham: I have listened carefully to the Minister's argument. Will he concede that a court martial is a tribunal of fact? With the jury system, we draw the membership of juries on a very wide basis. Should not the same practice apply to courts martial?

Mr. Stanley: If the hon. Gentleman has not already done so, he will want to look at the detailed study that was made by Mr. Justice Lewis. The report is still well worth reading. It brings out, for example, the basic difference in concept between courts martial and civilian courts with the jury system.

The litmus test is whether there is confidence in courts martial proceedings. I believe that most hon. Members who carry out service visits will agree that it is not an issue in the services. The services have a high degree of confidence in the manner in which matters are investigated by courts martial, because they make their decisions on a fair, objective and reasonable basis. In the absence of any degree of pressure or any material concern of which I am aware, I do not believe that there is justification for altering a very well tried and proven system.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Surely, the presence of, say, two senior NCOs on a court martial would not in any way diminish the dignity of the court or the quality of its judgement.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt want to hear the question argued more fully in Committee. Other aspects that he may want to consider are, for example, the relationship between summary proceedings and courts martial. There is no suggestion that summary proceedings should be handled other than by officers. I believe that is right. It would be somewhat anomalous to establish different methods of determining and dispensing justice as between summary proceedings and courts martial. That relationship would need to be looked at and considered.

Mr. Sayeed: From my experience of visits to naval and military establishments and my time in the service, I can confirm that I have found no wish on the part of NCOs for a change in the composition of courts martial. Indeed, it is sometimes forgotten in this House that many of the officers who serve on courts martial came up from the lower ranks. There is considerable confidence and respect in the composition of the court.

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments.

The final matter raised by the 1981 Select Committee concerned the service legal staffs. The Committee asked us to consider whether the Army and RAF could benefit from the Navy's system of recruiting volunteers from among their serving officers to read for the Bar and subsequently to perform their legal duties on a part-time basis. We were also asked to review the question of employing civilian rather than service prosecutors at courts martial.

We have considered both issues raised by the 1981 Committee, but do not propose to make any change at this time. However, as part of my right hon. Friend's review of the organisation of the Department that we set in hand last year, a full examination of the Department's legal services is being carried out by an independent legal consultant. That examination will include both issues.

It has been our traditional practice that, uniquely, armed forces Bills are remitted after Second Reading to a Select Committee. We propose that this procedure is followed once again.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House regularly pay tribute to the professionalism, skill and very high standing that our armed services enjoy at home and overseas. A firm, fair and modern framework of discipline is fundamental to maintaining the very high professional and personal standards found in the three services. The Bill will help to ensure that those standards are maintained. I commend it to the House.

4.46 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I join the Minister of State for the Armed Forces in his praise of the armed forces, for which we all have a high regard. It is the first duty of a Parliament and a Government to support and sustain the armed forces, as it is to protect the integrity of the kingdom. Among the many sins of our late sovereign James II—apart from losing the battle of the Boyne — which are listed in the Declaration of Rights in the No Lobby, is the fact that he was accused by Parliament

"of raising and keeping a standing army in the Kingdom in time of Peace without the consent of Parliament and of quartering soldiers contrary to law."

For that reason, for many years we had annual Army Acts legitimising the Army and later the RAF. The Navy was under the royal prerogative. The annual Army Acts were replaced by quinquennial Acts and yearly affirmation orders. The quinquennial Acts and, since the beginning of the century, the Army Acts were always preceded by special Select Committee proceedings to hear the Bill, take evidence and summon persons and papers. Last year,

the Select Committee recommended that it travel outside the realm, especially to BAOR, to take evidence on matters of importance to the morale and welfare of our armed forces.

The Bill deals not only with discipline in the Army, but with the armed forces in relation to the civilian population and the powers that the Executive, through Parliament, seek to give to the armed forces to carry out their manifold tasks. It is important to maintain the balance between the civilian population's view of the armed forces' role in society and the armed forces' position in their disciplined society.

The work of the Select Committee has been honoured and observed by the Government of the day. The many recommendations and criticisms made by the Select Committee, apart from the three mentioned by the Minister, were generally accepted. That says a great deal for the composition of the Select Committee and for the wisdom of the Government.

My hon. Friends the Members for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred to the courts martial. We regret that the Government did not believe that it was possible to introduce senior NCOs and warrant officers on to the courts. The Government said that there was no pressure or demands from the armed forces. I shall consider how the armed forces can express their interest later. However, we believe that courts martial would be strengthened by the inclusion of senior NCOs and warrant officers.

Mr. Sayeed: Has the hon. Gentleman found, or has the Committee found, any wish in the services for the composition of courts martial to be changed?

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): As the hon. Member who represents more service personnel than any other, I am not aware of any pressure for representation of non-commissioned ranks on courts martial. A more substantial point in terms of law is that officers are specifically trained to fulfil that function. Non-commissioned officers do not have that advantage. This is not a class or seniority matter. One third of those who serve as officers in the Royal Navy have served before the mast. I believe that officers' training is appropriate and that of non-commissioned ranks is not.

Mr. McNamara: I think it surprising that so many officers in today's Royal Navy have served before the mast. However, I shall return to the hon. Gentleman's point later. There should be an opportunity for non-commissioned ranks to express properly their opinion about these matters. In a disciplined service such as we have at present, it is difficult for them to do so. There should be a body through which existing procedures could be challenged.

Mr. David Young: It is more appropriate to discuss not the training already received, but the training that NCOs should receive, given their experience in Northern Ireland and the excellent job that they have done in command. In many areas, such as cruise missile sites, possible discipline charges arise involving forces of different powers. In those circumstances, members of our forces would like to be represented by their warrant officers who, in my experience, do more to run the armed forces than do the commissioned ranks.

Mr. McNamara: My hon. Friend has made an excellent point. If this is a matter of training, senior non-commissioned officers should receive training to gain the required skills.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): My recollection is that about 40 per cent. of the commissioned ranks in the Royal Navy gained their early experience on the lower decks, which is somewhat different from what the hon. Gentleman said. No doubt when my right hon. Friend the Minister replies he will confirm that figure or alter it to make it completely accurate. It is a significant proportion.

Mr. McNamara: It is a significant proportion, but they are commissioned officers, not non-commissioned officers.

As to the review of the services' legal staffs, I hope that any measures taken will not result in their privatisation. They should be retained within the armed forces and should be properly trained. The problem with the Bill is that it does not deal with matters that the Opposition have raised in the past. The first of those is homosexuality. In the recent Cyprus spy case, the prosecution suggested that secrets by the sackful were being handed by seven men from 9 Signals Regiment to the enemy, whoever he or she may have been, because they were threatened with blackmail after indulging in homosexual orgies. It was suggested that those men were susceptible to blackmail because of their alleged homosexuality, but one must ask why that is the case.

Why do the armed forces regard homosexuality much more harshly than we do in civilian life? Would it not be more sensible and realistic to approach the problem of homosexuality in the armed forces, as our amendments to the last Bill stated, by saying that it should be regarded as a punishable offence only where it was prejudicial to good conduct and discipline? Had we adopted such an attitude, many of the terrible things that happened to the men in the Cyprus treason trials would not have arisen, and we should have maintained the dignity of the individuals involved. It might also have prevented the recent case of a 20-year-old private soldier in the King's Regiment, who was jailed for life after strangling a friend who had threatened to reveal to officers that they were having a homosexual affair.

Sentences of nine months' imprisonment merely for having a homosexual affair in the armed forces are not uncommon. Such conduct would not be punishable under the general law. We should try to make military law as compatible as possible with civil law. The Opposition want those alterations to the military law.

I do not condone homosexuality. Indeed, I regard it as indulging in a grave sin, but that is a question of my private morality. It is not the way in which society regards homosexuality. Provided that we can maintain good discipline and order, it should not be necessary to hold the crime of homosexuality over the heads of many of our service men and make them subject to the sort of blackmail that was alleged in the Cyprus trial. I hope that the Select Committee and the Standing Committee will consider the matter.

It does not surprise me that the Bill does not provide a better definition of "enemy" in the clauses dealing with the death penalty. Crimes that attract the death penalty include communicating with the enemy, obstructing operations, mutiny or incitement to mutiny, and surrender

[Mr. McNamara]

of a place to an enemy without lawful excuse and as a deliberate attempt to assist the enemy. If those young men had been found guilty in a court martial in Cyprus during a war, they may all have been subject to the death penalty. We could not allow that sort of thing to happen.

There does not seem to be any real evidence, other than a Catch-22 situation, to show that the death penalty is a deterrent even on the battlefield. It does not properly apply at present to our own Army and Air Force. Those are volunteer forces with volunteer reserves, and they know what they are letting themselves in for, unlike the conscript armies of some of our allies.

Dr. Glyn: I am not quite clear. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the definition of enemy should be changed? I cannot find a better definition, but perhaps he can.

Mr. McNamara: I am not suggesting that the definition of enemy should be changed. For the sake of the present argument I am prepared to accept that because we are stuck with it, as the Minister has said. I am saying that the death penalty should be dropped from the category of sanctions in terms of military discipline. That is not only because of the different nature of our armed forces, but because there is no need for it. The last thing that a soldier thinks about on the battlefield is whether, if he takes a particular course of action, he will be put up against a wall and shot. To make that sort of suggestion is an insult to the nature of our armed forces.

While the death penalty is there and while we have the possibility of what can arise in a court martial—given the problems that exist and have been shown in the evidence in the Cyprus case—we should be careful of having any sort of punishment that is so final that there can never be a review of the case to help the person sentenced. When I was dealing with the matter of the representation at courts martial of non-commissioned ranks, I alluded briefly to another matter. If there was a trade union in the services many of the problems arising from the Cyprus incident would possibly not have arisen. Most of our European allies have trade unions or trade union representation. Most of our continental allies have some sort of representation and some sort of proper way by which non-commissioned ranks and, in some cases commissioned ranks, can deal with problems.

Mr. Bermingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that what he and many of our hon. Friends are saying is that the dictum of Lord Justice Mansfield in 1812 in the case of Burdett and Abbot is still as applicable today as it was then? He said:

"a person does not, by enlisting in the armed forces, thereby cease to enjoy his rights as a citizen, or to be exempt from his liabilities under the ordinary law of the land."

In other words, a service man is equally a citizen with equal rights and equal responsibilities. By retaining things such as the death penalty, we deny service men that equality.

Mr. McNamara: I accept what my hon. Friend says, although I did not put it as succinctly as Lord Mansfield, whose dicta at one time were my usual bedtime reading. I was trying to make the same point at the start of my speech. If we look at our NATO allies we shall see that trade unions are established for the armed forces in Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg, where they have the right to be consulted but not negotiate. In Demark, professional organisations have negotiating rights. That is not granted in Greece, France and Italy. It exists but it is not exercised in Ireland.

Many of the problems we had in the Cyprus trial would never have arisen if there had been a proper organisation through which those young men could have been properly represented. Nobody is forced to join one of these organisations, but when we come into power we shall investigate the possibility of such organisations. People should feel that there is a way in which they can somehow ventilate their grievances among themselves and through their elected representatives. Hon. Members say, "Non-commissioned ranks have never come up to us and voiced that opinion," but, of course, they would not. If we want a fine example of exactly the way in which that matter can be dealt with, we have only to look at the way in which the Police Federation works. The police are a disciplined force and on some occasions some people might say they are almost a paramilitary force. But it is worth looking at the way in which the federation deals with the issues concerning its members.

Another matter that should be part and parcel of this Bill and which should be part of the debates in the House, is section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act which gives the Government total immunity against legal action for negligence that results in the death or serious disability of any service man during his day-to-day activities in peace time. My right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) has raised this matter in the past in the House, and I feel duty bound to raise it today so that we can have it on record and perhaps look at it in Committee. It is a matter that ought to be brought up to date so that we can deal with it in some detail.

In looking at the Army we are looking at two unique regiments, the Gurkhas and the Ulster Defence Regiment. Despite the press statement made earlier this year by the Secretary of State about the Gurkhas when he announced the disbandment of one battalion, for reasons we understand, there is still some uncertainty about the Gurkhas' strength and future size. We know that the Gurkhas will be maintained after 1997, but we are entitled to know to what extent they will be maintained. We need to know their size and how changes will affect the great dependence that the Kingdom of Nepal has upon this country in terms of remittances and the health of the traditional ties that exist between this country and Nepal through the establishment of the Gurkha regiments.

We should also look at the Ulster Defence Regiment, the largest regiment in the British Army. It is unique in that it was raised to serve only in the six counties of Northern Ireland. It is subject to violent passions, enormous support and enormous hatred. If we look at the Anglo-Irish declaration to be debated next week and which is being debated this week in Dail Eireann, we see that among the matters that the conference between the two Governments will consider is:

"The two Governments agree that there is a need for a programme of special measures in Northern Ireland to improve relations between the security forces and the community, with the object in particular of making the security forces more readily accepted by the nationalist community."

It then goes on to say in article 7 that the conference shall consider,

"improvements in arrangements for handling complaints".

That is important and fundamental and one would like to know the limits to which that applies. Does it apply to all regiments which from time to time would be taking part in security matters in Northern Ireland, or does it apply just to the Ulster Defence Regiment? What are the relationships to be?

When Parliament originally insisted that we should be able to control our forces, considerable concern was expressed about the part that they would play in peace time and in the period leading up to war. That matter has now received fresh ventilation and has been given fresh importance as a result of the activities of the member Governments of NATO about the special procedures that shall be followed in peace time leading up to possible aggression and being prepared, if necessary, to repulse it.

The provisions to be proposed will contain important emergency powers that the military will have over the civilian population. We gather that these measures have been subject to revision in recent years, and we know that copies of them exist. There are three such measures, entitled the Emergency Powers (No. 1) Bill, the Emergency Powers (No. 2) Bill and the Emergency Powers (No. 3) Bill, titles that could be invented only by someone with that ingenuity for which the Civil Service is well known.

The Emergency Powers (No. 1) Bill creates defence zones around key points, to be known as "ground defence areas"—to be declared so by the Home Secretary—and ordinary residents of those areas may be expelled and their houses may be destroyed to make way for clear fire zones. The Home Secretary may also make orders for people to be detained without charge or trial, and demonstrations can be contained.

The Emergency Powers (No. 2) Bill enables the Government to extend those powers throughout the country and provides for a degree of priorities which would be understandable in time of war. The Emergency Powers (No. 3) Bill is more draconian. It does away with the existing legal system, allows for summary courts martial and trials, including provision for the death penalty, and provides for many and varied regulations to be enforced.

We should be debating those provisions as part of the military discipline measures that we are discussing now. I find it hard to accept the Government's attitude, and that of the Prime Minister in particular, that such matters should be left until circumstances arise which would cause them to be discussed; in other words, when we are moving into a period of war or crisis, a time when temperatures are likely to be raised internationally and, indeed, in the House.

In such a situation there is fear of a threat, when a sense of panic enters even the most phlegmatic of debating chambers. Hon. Members who were here at the time of the introduction of the original Prevention of Terrorism Act will recall the Government saying, in effect, "We have a problem which must be dealt with now." In such a situation, legislation can go through in 36 hours, with a major Bill affecting the civil liberties of the nation coming into force.

We would be better employed spending our time considering the threat and the content of the legislation. I do not believe, in the circumstances outlined by the Prime Minister in her letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), it is

"for the Government . . . of the day to determine the content and introduction of any such measures"

because there are other ways to go about it.

Mr. Sayeed: Surely, only the Government of the day and Parliament will know the circumstances appertaining at the time. Because we cannot know those circumstances, we would be dealing with a hypothetical situation.

Mr. McNamara: West Germany has emergency legislation, the Netherlands has similar legislation passed by the Dutch Parliament and, of our NATO allies, Norway, Canada, Belgium, Greece, the United States, Portugal, Iceland, Spain, Turkey, Italy, France and Luxembourg all have legislation designed to deal with precisely the circumstances about which I am talking.

The best thing that Her Majesty's Government could do would be to publish those measures in a White Paper. The measures exist and we know what they are about. We should then at least be in a position to debate the contents of the White Paper. Unless they are published, the Government will be making a gift to their enemies by allowing them to suggest that they have something really evil to hide.

An enemy could suggest that they were taking powers so draconian that even this Parliament, with its ability to question the Executive, will be gone. It could be said that we were not able to defend the individual and that the very rights that NATO existed to defend had been thrown out of the window. That is a dangerous and foolish position for Her Majesty's Government to adopt. Do they have something to hide? If not, why not publish the details?

Mr. Sayeed *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I hope that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) will relate his remarks from time to time to the Bill that is before the House.

Mr. McNamara: Indeed, I am doing that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Sayeed: My question to the hon. Gentleman was whether we could at this time determine all the circumstances under which we would need to use such measures. If they cannot be determined now—because those circumstances may modify the Bill that is finally brought before the House—why publish it? So long as we have the framework of the measure, we have all that is needed.

Mr. McNamara: But we do not even have the framework of the measure. All our allies in NATO, with the exception of Denmark, have the framework of their legislation and know where the powers will lie, including the powers of the military. What will be the powers of the military over the civil population of this country? Let us not forget that those powers in relation to the civilian population have been the essence of the debates on the Army that have taken place in this House for the last nearly 300 years.

Why are the Government not prepared to publish those measures? Is it because secret arrangements have been made between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the United States determining the amount of help that would be given to the United States in a build-up of hostilities or in relation to the great flood of American troops coming to Britain as our main battle army goes to northern Germany and our marines to Norway?

[Mr. McNamara]

In connection with the power that such foreign troops might have over our civilian population and the degree to which they would be able to conscript that population, there is already in existence

"An agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany concerning host nation support during crises or war."

That exists between us and the Germans. I hold in my hand another entitled:

"The relationship on host nation support . . . between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany."

However, no agreement has been published of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States concerning the powers that would be given to our military and to their military. Those details should be in the measure that we are discussing tonight and should be spelt out to the United Kingdom population.

If it is good enough for the Germans to know what we would do to them and for the Germans to know what the Americans would do to them, why cannot we know what the Americans would do to us? I cannot see the logic behind the Government's reluctance to provide that degree of information. We should know what the powers of the military will be.

This is an important Bill, but it has enormous gaps in terms of the nature of what we—the country and its citizens—should know about what is going on. As our treaty with Germany is public, as is the United States treaty with Germany—and that is very detailed, as an examination of the documents show—the details of a similar treaty between Britain and the United States should be made known.

Matters that arose out of the Cyprus trial are now the subject of an inquiry by Mr. Calcutt. That matter was raised earlier, and the Minister said that he could not give a precise timetable about it. I wonder whether hon. Members should, in Committee on the Bill or in a Select Committee, complete their work before they receive the findings from Mr. Calcutt's inquiry, because his findings will be fundamental to discipline in the armed forces.

Hon. Members may have seen an article in the *Daily Mirror* about the way in which different people were dealt with by the military, how confessions were obtained and the methods under which the interrogators were trained. All prisoners of war should be treated in accordance with the 1949 Geneva convention, which was signed and ratified by this country and most other powers. Contained within the convention is a provision that influences the instruction given to our own armed forces' police and interrogators, which states:

"Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatement"

are prohibited. That may apply to the treatment of enemy prisoners, but is it the way we treat our own people during interrogation in internal security operations?

A close consideration of the rules and regulations governing these matters raises the question of application of the judges' rule. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) raised that matter earlier and received a reply from the Minister. It appears that the judges' rule does not apply to the training of people involved in these interrogations. The guidelines state:

"In an internal security operation military interrogators may deal with a wide variety of types of prisoner. These may vary from members of student organisations acting as part of the propaganda or recruiting structure to members of the paramilitary or terrorist groups. Prisoners will normally be under police control and military interrogators will operate in conjunction with or as part of Special Branch. Ideally joint teams or centres should be formed."

What is the relationship between interrogators from the armed forces and special branch and other organisations? Are there many of these joint teams, and do they follow the various procedures laid down in the Geneva convention?

The interrogators are trained to follow Pavlovian techniques of interrogation, which may explain why they obtain many confessions but very few convictions. Included in those techniques are basic approaches that are hard, soft and neutral. The hard method of interrogation includes teasing and lowering the dignity of a detainee, thereby lowering his self-respect, and personal attacks on a detainee's physical and mental attitude and capabilities. It also includes taunts and goads. Such interrogation comes under the heading of "malicious humiliation"—so much for the prohibition of outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliation and degrading treatment as laid down in the Geneva convention.

Another harsh method of interrogation involves uncontrolled fury with associated ploys of "Mutt and Jeff", threat and rescue, which includes cynical derision, disestablishing one's identity and disorientation of time. All these methods of interrogation have been adopted in this country and interrogaters are trained at the Ashford training centre, Templer barracks, Kent. We cannot accept such methods as proper in a civilised society and they should be the subject of Mr. Calcutt's inquiry. They must be examined very closely. Service men are suffering from them, and they result in the creation of apparent confessions that are thrown out when they come before an Old Bailey jury.

How were British service men previously trained to deal with questions of internal security? Should there be a system of interrogation based upon Pavlov to protect the integrity of the realm? Mr. Calcutt must consider these matters, and I am indebted to the *Daily Mirror* for bringing them to light. That is not hearsay evidence or the comments of people who claim to have been subjected to "Mutt and Jeff" and told to co-operate or else. The evidence is in the broadsheets and they reveal the training methods. That is not good enough. A special Select Committee and the Standing Committee will have to consider them.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman is under a serious misapprehension and I should like to correct him.

He referred to military interrogation training carried out at Ashford. That training is for specialist groups and is intended to train them in resistance to interrogation methods practised by those who may be hostile to us. There is also a limited amount of interrogation training carried out for military personnel in wartime conditions which would be carried out within the ambit of the Geneva convention.

I must stress that the hon. Gentleman's reference to interrogation training at Ashford bears no relationship to the different and separate training in interviewing techniques given to service policemen. That training is not conducted at Ashford but is carried out elsewhere, in

accordance with the judges' rules. The hon. Gentleman has confused two different types of training of two distinct groups for different purposes.

Mr. McNamara: If the Minister thought it important to make that point, why do I see reference in my notes to interrogation in internal security operations relating to members of student organisations? There is also reference to joint action that may be taken with the police and service inquiry teams. Why is it necessary to have three different interrogation methods? Why have the Government not denied the stories that appeared in the *Daily Mirror*?

The service men in Cyprus were subjected to interrogation methods such as I have described. Mr. Calcutt will investigate the circumstances surrounding the interrogations, including sensory deprivation, long periods of sleeplessness and being kept for long periods without access to solicitors or lawyers. The details are contained in the documents in my possession and I shall place them in the Library where hon. Members may see them and judge for themselves. Perhaps the matter can be investigated in more detail in the Select Committee.

These important matters must be examined very carefully. The Bill is significant because of its omissions. Important matters relating to the safety of the realm, the dignity of the individual and the proper treatment of citizens are omitted. They should be discussed in the House and be subject to annual review. The Government could implement such reviews if they had nothing to hide. So long as they are not prepared to do that, or to allow us to see the proposed legislation in a White Paper or to put the matters before Committees or even publish the agreements with the United States and elsewhere, we must have the gravest suspicion. We should pursue these matters with considerable care and courage. I hope to get some answers in Committee.

5.30 pm

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I cannot agree with two of the points made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). The first relates to the agreement between ourselves and the United States on discipline. Secondly, he was a little confused, as my right hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, about interrogation, to which we all attach considerable importance. There are differences between the methods —if I am wrong, I am sure that my right hon. Friend will correct me—that are allowed under the Geneva convention for the wartime questioning of a captured enemy and the peacetime interrogating of troops. This fundamental point is accepted throughout NATO. I know that the hon. Gentleman is a great patriot, but I cannot agree with him on those points.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman could not see the distinction between the new and the old definitions of "enemy". It is extremely difficult. Those who have been looking into the matter have the same view. I cannot think of an example, except someone who "threatens the security of the state".

We all praise the dignity and professionalism of our services and their adherence to discipline. Naturally, we need an Armed Forces Bill to make sure that discipline is preserved. I welcome the amendments that are to be made to the Act. The revision will bring the armed forces more into line with modern conditions and with the civilian law. The definition of "enemy" is important, and we shall probably have to go into that carefully in Committee.

I asked my right hon. Friend the Minister about custodial orders. I did not put my question clearly, but I am grateful for his answer. Such introductions in the Bill will bring it more into line with our civil law. It is difficult to deal with such factors. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked my right hon. Friend the Minister about children sent over here for custodial sentences, and parents' ability to visit. My right hon. Friend rightly said that there is discretion because there is power to transfer the child. Again, there are differences between the armed forces and the ordinary civilian.

Clause 14 deals with the Reserve liability of women. I am not sure about this, but my right hon. Friend seemed to say that women in service now will not be compelled to sign a declaration, but that in future all new women entrants will be subject to the rule that applies to men. I am not certain whether this applies to their liability not only to recall after their service but to the definition of "secrecy", their previous access to documents and secrets, and the knowledge that they have acquired during their service. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be kind enough to clear up this point.

As my right hon. Friend knows, I regard the home service force as an essential part of our country's defence in war time. At what stage is it liable to come under the Act? I shall now put in a plug. I hope that we can ensure that the force's numbers are increased substantially. I know that it is doing a good job, but there are too few in it to meet the enormous demands that it will be required to undertake if hostilities break out—for example, the protection of power stations and ammunition dumps and the many other duties that it will have to perform.

My right hon. Friend referred also to the office of the Judge Advocate General. My service was a long time ago, during and after the war, so I may be wrong, but I found then that those in the Judge Advocate General's office tended not to be in touch with civilian law, to have qualified a long time ago, and not to have practised in the courts. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North mentioned this point. To be a good advocate, it is no good just getting called to the Bar. I am a qualified barrister, but I am not an advocate. One must keep in touch with the procedures and the changes in the law. One has to be up to date if one wants to be a good advocate. That point requires examination, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me.

A number of important changes are introduced by the Bill. The laws under which the American forces operate is their business. This point is not terribly important, and it is another on which I disagree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. It is not important for us to know the detail about this. American laws apply to American troops, under the Visiting Forces Act, if they are stationed in this country. That law applies to all United States service personnel wherever they serve, unless they break the civilian law, in which case there is machinery for them to be handed over. We operate under our disciplinary code, whether military, naval or air force, and they operate under theirs.

If an American service man commits an offence that can be tried under their military law—for example, a driving offence—which is also a civilian offence, such a case is normally dealt with by the civilian courts. I stand to be corrected by my right hon. Friend the Minister if that is not so. The Army does not deal with essentially civilian offences, although in law it has certain powers to deal with

[Dr. Alan Glyn]

them. Once they have been dealt with by a military court and sentenced, that is the end — they cannot be tried again.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that under the Visiting Forces Act 1952 one of the main problems, especially with regard to American service men involved in fatal motoring accidents, has been that they have tended to be tried by their own courts martial within their own jurisdiction? The decisions reached and sentences imposed have, in many cases, been offensive to the United Kingdom population, particularly when the victims have been United Kingdom citizens.

Dr. Glyn: The hon. Gentleman is correct. Some cases which have been dealt with by the military forces should have been dealt with by the civilian authorities. In some cases, the soldiers have been sent back to their own country. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that that has happened in a small minority of cases. The visiting forces law has been used when the civilian law could have been used. I do not think there are sufficient cases to need any alteration to the Armed Forces Bill.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the visiting forces law may need to be clarified, because American troops might be ordered to fire on British forces? I give as an example the recent incident in Italy where Italian and American soldiers were eyeball to eyeball over the Palestinian hijackers of the Achille Lauro. That could have resulted in a firing match. It could occur in this country. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is a serious matter and that the law should be clarified?

Dr. Glyn: The hon. Gentleman's intervention is rather far-fetched. There is little likelihood of the United States forces having to do that. I can think of only one possible case that the hon. Gentleman may have in mind. It relates to cruise missiles. If the American forces were obstructed, our forces might fire. As the Americans and ourselves work together, I do not believe that that could possibly occur, because the senior officers would be co-operating and not fighting. I can see what is behind the hon. Gentleman's fears, and I accept the premise upon which he bases his point.

We all recognise that the Visiting Forces Act 1952 has operated reasonably well. I am happy to see it continued, provided that its provisions are carefully administered and watched by both sides of the House.

I thank my right hon. Friend for the progress that has been made over the Victoria barracks in my constituency. They have been completely demolished. I also thank him for the co-operation that I have received. We look forward to the rebuilding programme and the barracks' occupation by Guards battalions so that Windsor will once again be a complete garrison town.

5.43 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): This is the first occasion on which I have been in the House when this measure has come up for its five-yearly renewal. I therefore looked at what had taken place previously to see what the tone of the debate was.

In 1981, the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) intervened, showing his interest in a matter which relates to his constituency. I saw that on that occasion it was mentioned that in 1976 the Minister described the Bill as a "Brigadoon" Bill — it appeared occasionally but regularly in the House. In 1981, the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) described it as more a naval refit. As a member of the Church of Scotland, may I suggest that it is akin to a quinquennial visitation, when members of the presbytery visit the kirk and review the spiritual welfare of the congregation and the fabric of its building.

On this occasion we are giving the measure its five-yearly check-up. It has perhaps attracted more attention than usual because of the cracks which may be appearing and which were evidenced by the events that culminated in the acquittal of the seven service men last month.

It would be wrong to prejudge anything that might come out of the investigation being undertaken by Mr. Calcutt. It is not unfair to say, however, that a considerable amount of public anxiety has been generated by that case. Some people may feel that, because of the nature of their operations, procedures in the forces tend to be somewhat rough and ready. It does not mean that by enlistment one loses one's civil rights. The opportunity should be taken during the Bill's passage to assess whether the present procedures for summary proceedings and courts martial, as they presently operate, are efficient and operate well enough to guarantee service men's civil rights.

We must consider also the matter of legal representation at various levels and eligibility for legal aid. The subject of the questioning and treatment of suspects has inevitably been raised because of the events of recent weeks. Section 99 of the Army Act 1955 and the Air Force Act 1955 state:

> "The rules as to the evidence to be observed in proceedings before courts-martial shall be the same as those observed in civil courts in England".

That reference clearly imports the judges' rules into the proceedings. Perhaps the Minister will confirm this point when he replies, but I understand that an exception can be made with regard to service men overseas. Nevertheless, the judges' rules are supposed to apply to courts martial here. The judges' rules are not binding; they have no statutory force. Anxiety has been expressed that judges advocate have not been as rigorous in applying the judges' rules as their opposite numbers in the civilian courts.

We understand that the Ministry of Defence is drafting its own code of practice under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. It is important to train those undertaking interrogation to ensure that they know the judges' rules and the code of practice and their implications.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): In addition to the important point that the hon. Gentleman has made, one of the factors which has arisen from the Cyprus trial, in which one of my constituents was involved, is that service men are cut off from their units and seem to be deprived of welfare and access to information and advice from people with whom they are familiar. Does he agree that it is important that they keep in touch with a familiar background, particularly when they are involved with the legal advice to which he has referred?

Mr. Wallace: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is even more important when one is considering the quality of confessions which have been obtained under

questioning. The background must be studied. A relevant factor is that men may have been cut off from their families and from surroundings with which they are familiar.

I wonder whether the Minister can tell us whether the Ministry of Defence code of practice will be ready in time for consideration by the Committee. It may be some time before it can be published, and, if so, what opportunities will hon. Members have to scrutinise it?

The concern that has been expressed about the applicability of the judges' rules must inevitably arise from concern that some unfair interrogation practices have taken place. The concern is not confined to Cyprus. When my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) learnt that I was to contribute to the debate, he handed me a dossier of papers containing an allegation of harassment on the part of someone serving in the Royal Air Force in West Germany. The dossier came into my hon. Friend's hands only during the past day or two and I have no doubt that it will be passed on to the Minister. As an appeal is pending, I do not wish to say any more about the matter. However, the allegation has been made and the matter is indicative of public concern about interrogation techniques.

If an individual is under arrest, especially close arrest, the interrogation which takes place and the evidence which appears in a statement of confession must be scrutinised carefully and with some degree of suspicion. As a Scots lawyer, I am very much aware of the case of Chalmers *v.* Her Majesty's Advocate, which I believe is often quoted in the English courts. The case came before the Scottish criminal courts and Lord Justice General Cooper described a police station as being a "sinister venue" for the questioning of a suspect. He said that that had to be taken into account as it could well taint any confession.

The interrogation of a suspect in close custody, which involves the deprivation of all liberty and constant supervision, is all the more suspect. It will be worth considering in Committee whether there is a need for a new clause to provide that any service personnel or police who behave oppressively in obtaining evidence or statements from suspects should be subject to a specific disciplinary offence.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) has mentioned the continuation of the death penalty. As one who opposes the penalty, especially in peace time, it is important in my view that we review again the necessity to continue to have the death penalty available in certain cases.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North referred also to the fact that homosexual activity is illegal and a disciplinary offence in the armed forces. If such activity were undertaken and conducted in civilian life it would attract no penalty. In 1981, the Select Committee took the view that the official argument that the legalising of homosexual activities would make homosexuals more open to blackmail was a weak one. The official line in the prosecution of the service men from Cyprus, however, was that the existence of homosexual activities made them more open to blackmail. It appears that the argument is being pressed in two ways. When the Bill is in Committee we should consider again whether there should be any relaxation of the law in this context to bring it more into line with civilian life, but in a way that is consistent with the maintenance of good order and discipline.

I shall address myself to the new clauses that the Bill seeks to import. I wonder whether the type of behaviour which is sought to be caught by the provisions contained in clause 2 should be subject to a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. I know that the hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) will deal with this issue at greater length if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall not pursue the issue to ensure economy of debate.

I welcome the provisions in clause 10 on community supervision orders. I accept that clause 11 applies to only a minority of cases but I feel that the court martial procedure is inappropriate for those as young as 15 years of age. If the clause is accepted and a new section is incorporated, it will provide for jurisdiction over civilians. The Minister has explained that the purpose is to keep the law as close as possible to that which applies in the courts in the United Kingdom.

In one part of the United Kingdom—the part from which I come—the courts system for cases that would be otherwise deemed offences does not apply to children under 16. Instead, there are children's hearings. I am not advancing a narrow and specious argument to make a point on behalf of the cause of nationalism. However, it is important that we remember that the law of Scotland is safeguarded. It is upheld by the Treaty of Union to which the House owes its present existence. There must be children who might be affected by these provisions who belong to Scottish families and whose domicile is in Scotland. These young people might be with a Scottish regiment and thereby have had no link with England. It is important that the Scottish provisions for children's hearings, which have been an important development in juvenile justice, are given greater recognition.

There is some recognition for children's hearings within the current Act. Indeed, the Bill refers to the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and the system of children's hearings. However, I do not think that that Act applies in this instance. If the Minister explains why this is so when he replies, I shall be grateful.

We are now considering the outcome of the Geneva talks, and perhaps our minds are more often on greater issues of defence than those which are set out in the Bill. That may cause us to think that we are dealing with a less important measure than others which come before us. However, the Bill deals with the civil liberties of those who serve the nation in the armed forces. I echo the tribute that has been paid to the armed forces by the Minister and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. They perform their duties in the defence of the nation and they carry out a valuable and professional service. It is important that their civil liberties are safeguarded carefully, and that is a proper role for the House. I am sure that in Committee and subsequently the House will give the Bill the careful scrutiny and attention that it deserves.

5.58 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester): I am glad to agree with the tribute that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) so rightly paid to our armed forces. I hope that he will forgive me if I do not follow in detail the tenor of his speech, which was confined largely to matters relating to the area north of the border. We shall all be interested to hear the response of my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Gentleman's remarks. I am glad that he paid tribute to our armed forces. Indeed, tributes have been paid to them by

[Sir Antony Buck]

Members on both sides of the House and they are entirely justified. I am glad that there is near-unanimity across the Floor of the House on these matters.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and I have paid frequent service visits, thanks to the help of my right hon. Friend and his Ministry. The hon. Gentleman and I have visited many parts of the world to see our armed forces, to examine their discipline and to admire the way in which they carry out their tasks. We have done so in Belize and in BAOR. Some time ago, the hon. Gentleman and I went to the Falkland Islands.

The performance of our armed forces is set out in the White Paper. The White Paper, with superb Tory British logic, has a blue cover, which I am glad to see. An omission is an analysis of the matters that we have been discussing. I do not think that there is available—it is certainly not available in the White Paper but it might be available in other Government documents—information corresponding to the criminal statistics that are produced by the Home Office annually. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider whether it would be appropriate to insert in future White Papers an analysis of courts martial —for example, the number of charges that have been brought and their outcome. That would enable us to determine what the trend is, which would be extremely relevant in considering the Bill. The statistics may be available elsewhere but I do not think so. I recommend that my right hon. Friend considers making this information available and I hope that he will be kind enough to take the recommendation on board. He might choose to make the information available when we come to consider these issues in Committee.

If the statistics are made available, I recommend that they should be broken down so that we may know, for example, how many offences took place in BAOR and how many in Belize. I recall a marvellous heading that I came across once at a Tory party conference. It read, "Tory vote broken down by age and sex". I suggest a more appropriate heading for a breakdown of where offences have taken place so we can ascertain whether a particular problem is developing within a certain military establishment. I suggest that the breakdown should separate the three services.

This is the first time for many years that we have not had available to us the great wisdom of the former Judge Advocate of the Fleet, Ewen Montagu, who has died since we last considered these matters. It is appropriate, when we are considering amending the service discipline Acts, to pay tribute to him. He gave tremendous support to the Royal Navy. His contribution went way beyond the discipline side. He was the author of "The Man Who Never Was", which was a outstanding intelligence coup during the war. It was a fascinating and interesting book he wrote on this. It is sad that he is no longer with us. I know that my appreciation of his wisdom is shared by the Royal Navy. He did an enormous amount of work over many years for the Royal Navy as Judge Advocate of the Fleet.

We welcome the Bill. Not much can be said about it on Second Reading because it clearly commands the support of both sides of the House. We shall want to give detailed consideration to many aspects in Committee. I know that my right hon. Friend the Minister will take seriously the valid points made by hon. Members. It will be right for the Committee to consider whether it is appropriate to retain the death penalty and to consider the difficult questions relating to homosexuality. I voted in favour of legalising homosexual acts between consenting males of full age, but I think that we would all concede that different considerations apply to the armed forces. Service men often live in tents or confined cramped quarters. Quarters on many of Her Majesty's ships are still small. Legalisation of homosexual acts could have deleterious effects on good conduct and military discipline. Those are legitimate matters for the Committee to consider.

Mr. McNamara: I do not think that anyone would disagree with the hon. and learned Gentleman. Why should it be a criminal offence for a person in barracks or service quarters to engage in such action while someone else employed by the Ministry of Defence in similar circumstances would not be committing a criminal offence? Equally, a person who was drunk on board a ship would be engaging in conduct prejudicial to good discipline and should be punished. But if someone is drunk in his own quarters, so what?

Sir Antony Buck: No doubt it will be the hon. Gentleman's happy fate and, if I am very lucky, my fate too, to serve on the Committee, when we can consider those matters. I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) is taking out his pen with alacrity to write my name down. Sometimes one has cause to regret what one says in response to the Opposition. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North has made a valid point. I look forward to considering it in greater detail. To impose the death penalty, even as a last resort, is to me anachronistic.

The Bill will put disciplinary matters on a regular and more sensible basis. It warrants detailed Committee scrutiny rather than long Second Reading speeches. It is concerned with the minutiae of service life rather than the broad brush approach. I am glad that we have this opportunity to consider service matters at this time. Remembrance Day has just passed. That is the most evocative time for our armed forces. This debate allows us to pay tribute to them.

It is especially appropriate to consider this legislation now because of the visit to the far east by the families of service men. I think that I am just in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in noting the position of people under the services umbrella visiting far-flung parts of the world. Would they be brought within the framework of the Bill? The welcome visits have been organised by the Ministry of Defence, and I should like to know how those people stand with respect to military discipline and protection.

We welcome this thoroughly sensible measure. It is gratifying that it seems to have all-party support.

6.6 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I begin where I left off in an intervention during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). I quoted the words of the late Lord Mansfield, who talked about a citizen having equal rights whether he was a serving officer, ranking or rating or just an ordinary citizen. The test of any society must surely be whether there is equality for all before the law. My voice appears to be one of the few dissenting voices on the Bill.

About 100 people are effectively serving sentences of imprisonment in the Colchester military corrective training centre, but their offences are not known to criminal law; they are offences against the military code. Has not the time come for us to recognise that, just as serving in the police force or in the professions is a form of service to society, so is serving in the armed forces? I declare an interest as a practising barrister because much of what I have to say will relate to the legal implications of the Bill, especially clauses 2, 4, 9 and 13. Whatever one's walk in life, one serves society. I would strongly argue that anyone who joins the armed forces serves society.

It is difficult to understand how in the 1980s we can say to men who volunteer to serve in one of the three services, "You shall be subject to a completely different set of rules and regulations. There will be acts that will not be punishable in society in large but will be punishable in your world." The hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) said that the time had come to consider whether it was appropriate to retain the death penalty. I believe that we must move towards a standard behavioural pattern and a set of laws that is the same for everyone.

Sir Antony Buck: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will wish to pursue the matter in Committee. I am glad that he mentioned Colchester military corrective training centre. Superb work is done by the staff there and we look forward to the new building being opened.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that it is appropriate for there to be a different standard of discipline for the armed forces with regard to going absent without leave. That can be dealt with on a civilian basis, but since it is within the armed forces it is appropriate that it should be dealt with in a manner different from that for companies such as Shell or ICI. In those companies persistent absence would mean dismissal. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that there should be differences in dealing with problems of that type.

Mr. Bermingham: I do not agree. If one does something in civilian life that does not merit a criminal penalty but leads to the deprivation of liberty—which is what we are talking about in a corrective training establishment—the same ought to apply for those in the armed forces. If somebody flagrantly walks out, he is in breach of contract and there are other ways of dealing with that rather than locking him up. That is another point that we can consider in Committee.

Perhaps we can look again at representation before various tribunals, whether before courts martial or any other of the summary jurisdictional courts in the Army, Navy and Air Force. It is argued by some that, if legal representation is allowed, it complicates and delays matters. However, it also creates a greater sense of justice in the result.

Clause 2, frankly, is draconian. It makes it a criminal offence to interfere with a signal or anything else, to interfere with a piece of machinery or any other material matter within the armed services. If the aggrieved mechanic deliberately leaves a spanner in the engine of a Centurion tank, the maximum penalty is life imprisonment, imposed by a court martial. At this stage I shall not enter into the argument about courts martial and whether they should be widened in their context. I made my point to the Minister in an intervention. If I am lucky enough to serve on the Committee, I shall make that point more forcefully and lengthily.

I do not want to cut across Mr. Calcutt's inquiry on the Cyprus trial—I await the outcome of that with interest —but I ask a question about clause 2. Under that clause, it is an offence intentionally to intercept or interfere with signals or other matters transmitted or received by wireless telegraphy equipment. The heart of the Cyprus case was whether signals had been intercepted and passed on. As clause 2 is drafted, all those men could have been tried before a court martial with the power, to sentence them to life rather than by a judge and jury at the Old Bailey.

I do not seek to criticise courts martial too heavily. I have been involved in one or two of them over the years and I have seen the results of them. I sometimes wondered whether a court martial, even with the Judge Advocate General's division present, would have come to the same decision as a jury of modern man's peers. I suspect, sadly, that the decisions would not have been the same.

Justice is an important privilege in a civilised society. I want to see justice for every service man serving under the colours. I do not believe that allowing courts martial to expand their powers and expand the type of offences that can be tried before them necessarily serves the best interests of justice and the British service man.

Dr. Glyn: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a soldier who abandons his post or does something of that nature, thereby endangering the lives of some of his comrades, should be treated differently from somebody who simply leaves his job in a factory or elsewhere?

Mr. Bermingham: That is a poor analogy. I say that with great respect to the hon. Gentleman. Any man who endangers the life of another commits a criminal offence, and he suffers the punishment of society for doing so. Whether he is a soldier, an employer, an employee or anybody else, that should make no difference. The penalty should be the same.

When one considers military justice, one should apply to those who are subject to it the same standards, tests and responsibilities, the same penalties and opportunities, as exist in a civilian court. That is the point that I seek to make in saying that clause 2 is dangerous and needs redrafting.

For example, when a man deliberately damages the engine of a bus or a transport vehicle in a factory, he commits an offence of criminal damage. As the Bill is drafted, the penalty for carelessness can amount, even if intentional, to a severe penalty. Surely we are not saying that that person should suffer more for being the careless mechanic in the army workshop. Why should there be a difference in penalty? In other words, there must be standardisation in justice in both civilian and forces life.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bermingham: If the hon. Gentleman had been here from the beginning of my remarks, perhaps I would have given way.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bermingham: I shall give way to my old friend.

Mr. Hind: I am much obliged. As a solicitor of many years' standing and a member of the Bar, does not the hon. Gentleman feel that when a soldier is involved in military service, and must consider the lives of others under fire, ordinary criminal law for the private person in the street does not apply? As a consequence, entirely different rules of discipline must apply. People are interdependent. Accordingly it must not be forgotten that people in the forces are volunteers. When they sign on, they accept the disciplinary code introduced by an Act of Parliament.

Mr. Bermingham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. If he had paid more attention to what I said instead of other matters, he would know that I have already answered that point when I said that, just as in civilian life people whose actions jeopardise the lives of others are subject to the criminal law, people in service life whose actions jeopardise the lives of others are equally subject to the criminal law.

The point that I sought to make was simple. The penalties to be imposed should always be the same. It matters not whether one jeopardises someone's life as a civilian or as someone in the forces — one is jeopardising the life of somebody else. That is the test. The penalties under military law should be the same as under civilian law. I am not saying that there should be a higher price because someone volunteers to be paid rather than to join the Army, the Air Force or the Navy. We can consider the matter in Committee.

Mr. Best: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bermingham: No, with great respect; I would rather move on.

Clause 2 concerns me considerably. I make exactly the same point about clause 4, but we can analyse it later.

I ask the Minister, before the Bill goes into Committee, to look again at clause 6, which concerns the right to re-examine a sentence. It removes the power of reconsideration of sentences of imprisonment or detention provided by section 114 of the Army Act 1955 and of the Air Force Act 1955. The power of review is useful because often when sentences are imposed people feel that perhaps they are not right. Perhaps that could be reconsidered before the Bill goes to Committee.

I have already made a point about clause 13. I concede that only four cases were involved last year, but an important step has been made and I welcome it.

All that I have sought to say can be encapsulated in a simple phrase. Every five years we are allowed to reconsider forces discipline. Time moves on, and just as Mr. Justice Lewis's report in 1946 dealt with the composition of courts martial, in 1985-86 it is right that we should reconsider in depth forces discipline. In 1986 are we to say to men and women, "Because you have chosen to serve the country in a certain way, you must be subject to penalties which we do not seek to impose and punishments which we do not seek to give to others who serve the country in other ways."? Surely justice should be the same for all who serve, regardless of where they serve.

6.20 pm

Mr. Peter Viggers (Gosport): I am the fifth consecutive lawyer to speak in the debate. The Committee will be a collector's piece, as and when it comes. For those who have nothing else to do during December 1985 and the early months of 1986, it will indeed be a memorable occasion.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) is wrong in his approach to discipline in the forces. He does not fully understand the commitment to discipline which is an inherent part of the life of those who serve in the armed forces. Those who volunteer know exactly what they are doing, and they take pride in their discipline. It would be wrong to think that they resent or should be resenting discipline as something which is imposed on them in excess of the discipline imposed on citizens. We can undoubtedly return to that point in Committee.

I listened with particular attention to the comments made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). He is always thoughtful and thought-provoking. However, I disagree with three main points that he made. First, he criticised the Government for not exposing through a White Paper the prospective or potential emergency powers which might be required in a state of emergency. We can take pride in the fact that we have peace, because we have the armed forces which enable us to remain a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. We can also be confident in the continuation of peace and in the fact that it is not necessary for us to expose this country to the emergency powers which might be necessary should we be subject to attack or internal emergency. Therefore, I take pride that it has not been necessary for the Government to produce a draft emergency powers White Paper.

I also take issue with the hon. Gentleman about representation at courts martial. His view derives from a fundamental misunderstanding of the way in which the courts martial system and armed forces operate. Nowadays men in the armed forces are not trained at Dartmouth for flag rank. The training is now given at each stage. In the Navy each sub-lieutenant is trained as a lieutenant, each lieutenant as a lieutenant-commander, and so on. It would be wrong to imagine that a non-commissioned rank who has not been trained in the specific duties of serving on a court martial could serve as a full member of a court martial. Moreover, there are many so-called "offences" for which a man can be court-martialled. An officer in the Royal Navy can be court-martialled for hazarding his ship. Is it suggested that non-commissioned ranks should serve on the court martial of the commanding officer of a ship who has been charged with hazarding that ship? The hon. Gentleman is thinking along the lines of having non-commissioned ranks present at courts martial to act as some sort of employees' or workers' representatives. That is not sensible.

Mr. Bermingham: Is it wrong that, for example, someone who works as a cashier in a supermarket should sit on a jury trying a man who has defrauded a large business as its managing director? No one would question that. Why should an ordinary seaman with plenty of experience not be allowed to serve on a court martial trying an officer?

Mr. Viggers: I return to my initial point. The hon. Gentleman does not understand the wholly different system of discipline which operates and needs to operate in the armed forces, and in which those who serve take pride. It is not possible to equate the two examples.

Mr. Hind: Perhaps I could draw a good analogy. Does my hon. Friend agree that often in the trial of major fraud cases in Crown courts a jury of ordinary citizens flounders among the miasma of accounts and paper work? Does that not demonstrate that the jury system may not be as strong as it needs to be? Likewise, a man who has never been in control of a ship is not as well equipped to judge a superior officer who is charged with putting a ship in danger as a man who has controlled a ship. Bearing that in mind, my hon. Friend is absolutely right.

Mr. Viggers: My hon. Friend makes a good point. As many hon. Members wish to speak, I prefer not to take it further now. We shall have ample opportunity in Committee to consider the point ad nauseam.

The third point on which I disagree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North relates to homosexuality and its effect on discipline should there be a relaxation in the present services rule. I cannot conceive of homosexuality being allowed within service establishments without it having a profound effect on discipline. That is another matter that we can undoubtedly discuss in Committee. No doubt one's view derives substantially from one's own approach to that subject generally.

Not one hon. Member has opposed Second Reading of the Bill. The main purpose of the annual discipline Acts has been to enable the Executive—previously the King—to have a standing Army. It is clearly no longer necessary for us to have annual debates to decide whether we should permit the armed forces to be maintained year by year. Therefore, from a legislative point of view, it is no longer necessary for us to have annual debates on the subject, although I note that a statutory order needs to be passed every year. Therefore, Parliament will not lose control.

The main reason why one might hesitate before voting for Second Reading is that it may affect parliamentary control. We can be reassured on that. There is a tradition, not a rule, that each year the House will have one day for a full debate on each of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force. That has given hon. Members sufficient opportunity to contribute on a broad range of subjects relating to the armed forces. Therefore, I do not see that by passing the Bill and depriving ourselves of a full debate on discipline on the Floor of the House, we will lose any control. For that reason, I support Second Reading.

I could make many other points, but they are Committee points, and there will be ample opportunity to discuss them there. Therefore, without further comment, I support my right hon. Friend in approving Second Reading.

6.28 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am not a lawyer so I will give a different perspective to this issue. My experience of military discipline is more dated than that of the hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers). I was a military policeman and I have had some experience of military discipline and courts martial. I should have thought that the aim of the Bill was the introduction of a reasonable and fair service disciplinary procedure which accords with the requirements of military discipline. I welcome the Bill, but with serious reservations. It may meet the perceived needs of senior military officers, officials at the Ministry of Defence and Ministers, but what of the expectations and needs of service men?

Clause 11 reduces the lower age limit from 17 years to 15 years for male offenders upon whom a court martial may impose a custodial order. I have serious reservations about that and agree with the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). The military ritual and procedure of a court martial is intimidating even for the toughest veteran let alone a boy of 15½. The court martial is entirely different from a hearing in the sheriff's court in Scotland or in a similar court in England and I am glad that that point was made so eloquently by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland.

The Select Committee of 1981 on the Armed Forces Bill said on the issue of courts martial and young people in paragraph 7, page V:

"One source of concern to the Committee however, was whether a court-martial, in sentencing a young offender in this way, would enjoy as full an understanding of the background to the offender's case as a civil court."

That is a serious qualification. The Committee went on to say:

"We appreciate the Services' view that reports by social workers on young Service offenders can be superfluous".

That can be said of any social worker's report for any court. The report continues:

"since within the intimate confines of a unit everything relevant about those offenders would be known to their commanding officers."

I do not share the Minister's confidence in the omnipotence of commanding officers, even in small units. Young military offenders need more comprehensive guidance than can be offered by officers. The senior non-commissioned officer has a major role to play. The report says:

"At present, there is an obligation for the prosecution under Army Rules of Procedure to call an officer as a witness whenever possible to give evidence to a court martial about an accused's social background, etc. This officer can make use of the work of professional social workers in preparing his evidence, although it is not incumbent upon him to do so. A safeguard exists against such an officer being in any way negligent in the preparation of his evidence in that the court can be adjourned pending more complete social knowledge of the accused."

Although my experience is severely dated, it was that the sergeant or the company sergeant major has a greater understanding of battalion life than a young officer who has recently joined the regiment. That is no criticism of the officers. However, senior NCOs, and I stress senior, have an important role to play.

Senior NCOs could act as witnesses, especially for the very young soldiers who will come within the Bill's scope. In a court martial trying young soldiers it would be helpful to have a senior NCO sitting with a judge advocate and three or four officers. I am not suggesting that an NCO should be on a court martial of an officer—I am concerned only about young military offenders.

Another anxiety raised by the Bill is its seeming denial of legal representation. The National Council for Civil Liberties, has, I believe, sent every hon. Member a briefing, page 3 of which says:

"At present there is no right to legal representation on summary trial. Some offences are dealt with by summary trial. Before a court martial, or before the court martial appeal court someone charged may defend himself or may be represented by a defending officer of his/her choice, or by a civilian lawyer."

The NCCL's criticism is that the defendant often does not see a lawyer until shortly before the court martial. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's response to that criticism.

The NCCL also criticises the rules governing the punishment of those who have become ill or have been

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

absent without leave. Why does such action lead automatically to imprisonment? Why can we not consider instituting financial penalties? Young men, especially if they have domestic problems, will sometimes decamp without seeking guidance from a senior NCO or officer.

We should also consider premature voluntary release. Contracts of engagement in the forces are for terms of three, six, or nine years. Like the NCCL, I believe that long-term engagement should not be made for people under the age of 18. Similarly, there should be more frequent opportunity of discharge and a review of the discharge machinery.

I have had some experience of questioning accused personnel, although I was no hard case. I would argue that I was Mr. Nice. I never interrogated but always interviewed people. When interviewing service men or women, military policemen are expected to observe the judges' rules and administrative directions to the police. Paragraph 3 of appendix B of those rules provides protection for accused persons and, under the heading "Comfort and refreshment", says:

"Reasonable arrangements should be made for the comfort and refreshment of persons being questioned. Whenever practicable both the person being questioned or making a statement and the officers asking the questions or taking the statement should be seated."

My experience is severely dated, but I suspect that some of my colleagues ignored that rule. Paragraph 4 of appendix B applies directly to clause 11 and the court-martialling of boy soldiers of 15. Under the heading

"Interrogation of children and young persons"

it says:

"As far as practicable children and young persons under the age of 17 years (whether suspected of crime or not) should only be interviewed in the presence of a parent or guardian or in their absence, some person who is not a police office and is of the same sex as the child."

I put it to the Minister that, under those circumstances, and if the judges' rules are to be adhered to, a senior NCO could play an important role when a youngster is being interviewed. Will the Ministry of Defence be drafting a code of practice under the legislation concerning the interrogation or interviewing of accused persons? If so, will all hon. Members be given an opportunity to examine that?

The Minister said in his opening speech that we seek a fair, firm and modern system of discipline. I agree that that is precisely what we need in the armed forces. I said earlier that I had serious reservations about the Bill but I welcome the procedure and the fact that a Select Committee is to be set up. It can scrutinise in depth the reservations that are shared by some of my hon. Friends.

6.40 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): This is a narrow debate when we think of what has been happening in Geneva. Very little time is given in the House to debates on the nuclear arms race. In the future I may be able to place on record my views on that important matter.

The Bill deals with service discipline. If there were a nuclear war the disciplinary code would be largely irrelevant. In the panic and hysteria, Army discipline will be about widespread summary executions. After the bomb no one will be left. Cetainly there will not be a recognised command structure or the sort of discipline referred to in the Bill.

The Bill still allows the death penalty to be imposed in the armed forces. The same arguments in regard to the death penalty should apply to the armed forces as to society in general. There is a danger of an innocent person being executed. It is barbarous sentence. Cold-blooded state murder should not be countenanced by a civilised society. There is no place in our society for the death sentence, and that should include the armed services. The services are not so special as to be above the rest of us. They should not be immune from general laws nor should they receive punishments that are not applicable to the rest of society.

The Bill still denies to service men and women trade union representation. Everyone should have the right to join a trade union. That should be a fundamental freedom. The armed services are a closed shop where no one can join a union. Service men and women do an important job of work and workers need trade unions. Trade unionism has greater relevance to the armed forces because of their structure. There is a hierarchical direct line management structure which gives rise to great dangers of injustice. Trade unions are vital to the disciplinary process and to grievances being properly channelled. Service men and women should have someone they can trust to represent them.

Homosexuality in the armed forces has been raised in the debate. I want to draw to the attention of the House and the Minister an article in today's *City Limits* magazine. The headline is:

"Did Army cover up gay suicide?"

The article says:

"An ex-corporal in the British Army has alleged that a senior officer in Northern Ireland killed himself after being named as a homosexual. Corporal John Fanning claims that the officer involved was attached to the Military Police — whose plain-clothed arm, the Special Investigations Branch, is responsible for weeding out gays and alleged wrongdoers. . . . It was the SIB which was at the centre of allegations of malpractice during the recent Cyprus secrets trial. . . . Fanning claims the army hushed up the death. An inquest recorded a verdict of misadventure."

Corporal Fanning is a homosexual. Referring to his treatment by the special investigations branch the article quotes him as saying:

"It all happened within hours. At 11 o'clock I was having tea, and at a quarter past I was somehow a monster with five legs and three heads."

The article says:

"According to Fanning the officer"—

that is the officer who committed suicide—

"was confronted by his own subordinates during the week of January 21. Then on Saturday January 26 the officer died while on a training exercise in the south of England."

There were mysterious circumstances. The article later says, in regard to Corporal Fanning:

"'I was flown back to Northern Ireland and given a court martial. During the hearing all reference to the officer was deleted. I made a statement 80 pages long and only one and a half pages were read out.' He"—

that is, Fanning—

"believes the officer committed suicide because, as a senior officer with a wife and family, he could not bear the disgrace of being named as a homosexual."

I hope the Minister will investigate that article and ensure that there was not a cover-up.

That raises the issue of bad treatment of homosexuals in the armed services. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) referred to the serious danger of blackmail. Some of us who have enlightened views on these matters consider that macho mateyness and Ramboism have distinct homosexual

connotations, albeit repressed. Much of that is inevitable in the armed forces. It probably takes place on a large scale.

It is time to stop the hounding of homosexuals by the special investigations branch. It should concentrate on more serious offences such as drug abuse and crimes of violence in the community and against fellow members of the armed forces. The hounding by the special investigations branch is contrary to civil liberties. It generates greater repression and fear among individuals. Homosexuality, if in private between consenting adults, should not lead to discrimination or disciplinary action anywhere, and certainly not in the armed forces.

6.47 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): I apologise for speaking in the debate when I was not present for the first three hours. I have a good excuse in that I have just returned with the Select Committee on Defence from a visit and was unable to be here for the earlier part of the proceedings.

Despite the sparse attendance, the debate is very important from a constitutional standpoint. The Bill is the lineal descendant of the epochal legislation following the Civil War and the Restoration, when Parliament tried to establish supremacy over the military. Supremacy was not achieved then. It was only in the 18th and 19th centuries that there was genuine parliamentary supremacy over the armed forces.

The Bill, and the Select Committee that is to be set up later, are part of the process by which we, as elected representatives, ensure that we control the internal discipline of the armed forces. The legislation is of critical importance not just in legislative-Executive relations or in civil and military relations but in the whole nature of parliamentary democracy.

If the Select Committee that is to be established takes the same form as the last one, of which I was a member, I shall not be entirely happy. That Committee was formed and the great enthusiasm for it lasted a week, after which it waned. At some meetings the Select Committee was barely quorate. On some occasions the witnesses outnumbered the Committee by four or five to one. I have never seen so many witnesses appearing before a Select Committee. On one occasion I counted 23. I do not think that it is right to have a sort of Select Committee procedure first, before examining such an important Bill line by line.

I shall not be diverted by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who raised the question of homosexuality in the armed forces. A person can be thrown out of the armed forces for being homosexual, without having necessarily committed a homosexual act. It was fortunate for Macedonia and Rome that their great leaders were not barred in that respect, as British generals and privates would be. I am not arguing that being a homosexual should be a prerequisite for anyone holding the post of admiral or general, but there seems to be some correlation between sexual orientation and genius as a commander.

A good deal of nonsense emerges from debates such as this. I recall reading what General Westmoreland said in opposing the presence of women in the armed forces. He said that in a crisis they would be more likely to make love than war. I should have thought that being imprisoned in an NBC suit in a trench with a Russian T72 tank bearing down on one, would be anything but an aphrodisiac.

It was thought that the last Select Committee on which I served would prove to be very boring, but, far from being boring, we dealt with what I call the "Queeg phenomenon" — how to deal with captains who go bananas in the course of duty. We dealt with drug-taking, murder and homosexuality. Never has my liberal conscience been exercised so frequently to so little avail as in those proceedings.

My view may not be applauded by my colleagues, but I regard the quinquennial Select Committee, brought together merely to examine legislation of this sort, as an unfortunate procedure. The Committee should not be an ad hoc one that disappears almost as swiftly as it is established. I ask the Minister and the Leader of the House to remember that there is a Committee — the Select Committee on Defence—already in situ.

There are precedents for legislation of this type being referred to a Select Committee, but I do not think that the members of the present Select Committee should be the only people to have the privilege—if that is what it is—of sitting on the Committee. There are precedents for adding Ministers to a Committee. The further precedent could be set of adding an Opposition spokesman. My suggestion is that the illustrious Minister of State should join the Select Committee on Defence. It would be a classic case of a gamekeeper turned poacher, or vice versa.

Mr. Wallace: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that, when the Select Committee on Defence was set up the argument from the Liberal Bench was that the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) should be part of it? He is not, and no alliance Member is on the Committee. Would the hon. Gentleman wish the Select Committee to proceed without having a member of the alliance on it?

Mr. George: The point that I was seeking to make was that the Committee should not consist only of the present members but that it should be added to. That would be better than the unsatisfactory procedure of having three sessions of evidence and then going through the procedure of an ordinary Standing Committee. Having seen the lack of enthusiasm for such a procedure, I can assure the hon. Member that it is not satisfactory.

I ask the House to consider my suggestion, for which there are precedents. I believe that if it is accepted, this vital piece of legislation is more likely to be dealt with in a manner commensurate with its importance.

6.56 pm

Mr. McNamara: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to speak again.

I do not wish to follow too closely the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George), except to say that I thoroughly disagree with him. He started by saying that it was an important constitutional matter of concern to all hon. Members. That is correct. Therefore, it is not a matter which concerns only the excellent Select Committee on Defence, with its expertise. All hon. Members should have an opportunity to take part in the debate. Defence is not simply a matter for the Select Committee on Defence, nor is it of interest only to the two main parties in this House. Every hon. Member has a right to be heard on this most important constitutional matter.

Nevertheless, I congratulate my hon. Friend on getting here in time for the debate. He was the only member of the Select Committee who was able to get here.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): If we do not speak, that does not mean that we are not interested.

Mr. McNamara: With regard to the speech of the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn), we do not want American law applying to British citizens. The Visiting Forces Act 1952 effectively removes foreign forces from British courts of law, even in regard to ordinary civil acts of wrongdoing.

Those are matters which will have to be considered in the Special Select Committee. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, South will volunteer to be the Whip for both sides of the Committee. Then we can assure ourselves of 100 per cent. attendance and an excellent relationship. In addition, as a Whip he will not be able to speak so much.

6.57 pm

Mr. Stanley: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to make the shortest wind-up speech that I have ever made on the Second Reading of a Bill. Hon. Members will understand that in the time available I shall not be able to answer all the points, but we shall be able to pursue them in detail in Committee. I will try to respond briefly to a few of them.

I did not cover in my opening remarks the provisions in service law governing homosexuality. The matter was mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and several other hon. Members. It is an issue that we shall be able to discuss at length in the Select Committee. I endorse what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) and other hon. Members—that this area of service law has to be seen first and foremost against the backcloth of the service environment. There are fundamental differences between the civilian and the service environment.

One of the key facets of the service environment is that service men in a unit must conduct themselves professionally, often in circumstances of high stress when they have to be able to depend absolutely on their fellow men with whom they are in a professional relationship. There has to be absolute confidence and trust between them. I hope that hon. Members will ask themselves whether that sort of professional relationship, in operational circumstances, is compatible with the existence of active sexual relationships between certain members of a unit. That is a serious question to which hon. Members should address themselves.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Dr. Glyn) for what he said about pressing on with the work on the Victoria barracks. On his remarks about the Visiting Forces Act 1952, I commend to him the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department on 19 December 1983, which spells out the legal implications extremely well.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) seemed to be under the impression that the judges' rules may not apply overseas. I assure him that service police are required to act, wherever they may be, according to the judges' rules. There is no foundation for the suggestion that they do not apply overseas.

The hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) raised an important point about the make-up of the Committee. I agree with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North that there is widespread interest on both sides of the House that has been reflected in the broad width of contributions from members of the Select Committee, my hon. Friends and from hon. Members who have chosen to contribute to the debate, although their interests are wider than purely defence matters. I believe that an ad hoc Committee is the appropriate way to proceed. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Select Committee. — *[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

Museum of London Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The main purpose of this short Bill is to give the Government and the Corporation of the City of London equal shares in the funding of the Museum of London and in the appointment of members of its board of governors, following the abolition of the Greater London council. At present, the Government, the City and the GLC each contribute one third of the members of the board. As the House will recall, last Session the Government announced their intention to divide the GLC's share equaily between the two other partners after abolition. It was not possible to make provision for those new arrangements in the Local Government Act 1985 which abolishes the GLC. This was partly because the Government wanted to make amendments to the Museum of London Act 1965 and to effect other repeals, neither of which could be done under the terms of that Act. Therefore, the Local Government Act provided for the transfer, from next April, of the whole of the GLC's share to the Government, as an interim measure. The Bill supersedes the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act before they come into effect, and amends the 1965 Act governing the Museum of London.

The Bill is being treated as a hybrid measure. Hon. Members will recall that that involves special additional parliamentary procedures. The procedures are already under way, and I have no reason to expect any difficulty. They do not affect today's Second Reading debate.

Before I deal in detail with the contents of the Bill, it may be helpful to remind the House of the history of the Museum of London. The museum had its origins in two long-established institutions — the Guildhall museum, primarily concerned with the square mile of the City, and the London museum, concerned with a much broader survey of London's history. The two museums were merged into one organisation on 1 June 1975 when the Museum of London Act 1965 came into effect. In December 1976, the present superb Museum of London building in the Barbican, specially designed to accommodate the joint collections, was opened by Her Majesty the Queen.

The Guildhall museum was established in 1826 by the corporation as an adjunct to its newly revitalised library. It was to accommodate

"such antiquities as relate to the City and suburbs".

The museum was, from the start, intimately associated with the archaeological investigations of building sites in the City. In 1966 the museum became a separate department of the corporation. In 1973 a full department of urban archaeology was established at the museum.

The London museum was founded in 1911, when the first Viscount Harcourt used private funds at his disposal to establish the museum at Kensington palace. Financial support was assumed by the Treasury in 1912. The museum was governed by Treasury minute and administered through a board of trustees.

After the second world war, closer working links were established between the two museums, mainly as the result of arrangements for the excavation of the City's war-damaged site. By 1960, it had become apparent that the premises in which the museums were housed were inadequate. Negotiations began which had the object of merging the museums into a new and comprehensive institution to be devoted to the history of Greater London. The agreement eventually reached was formalised in the Museum of London Act 1965.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the present board of governors of the Museum of London, under the distinguished chairmanship of Mr. Michael Robbins, and to the museum's talented director, Mr. Max Hebditch. Together they have contributed to an enormous amount to its successful development in the past 10 years, and have enabled it to become widely admired as a jewel in London's crown. It is fitting also to recognise that this would not have been possible without the tremendous support and encouragement of the Corporation of the City of London, to which we are all indebted, not least for the fine premises which the museum now occupies. We must build on this success and establish the statutory basis for the museum's development in the decades that lie ahead. The museum and the City welcome the 50:50 sharing arrangement and the clarification of the board's powers. The Bill has their support.

The Bill's main purpose is to share the appointment of governors and the funding between the Government and the City on a 50:50 basis. That is achieved by clauses 1 and 3. It also redefines the powers of the board of governors, for the sake of clarity and to bring them more into line with other modern museum legislation. That is the object of clause 2. I shall say more in a moment about the funding of archaeological services in London, which is covered by the new provisions in clause 4.

Clause 1 deals with the appointment of governors and provides that the Prime Minister and City corporation should each appoint nine, in place of the six currently appointed by each of the Prime Minister, the City and the GLC. There are transitional provisions to stagger the terms of office of the new appointees. Clause 1 supersedes the relevant provisions in the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I may have misread the Local Government Act 1985, but it would appear that this Bill seeks to change the original Museum of London Act 1965. However, decisions in relation to that Act were made during the passage of the Local Government Act. It was decided that the number of board members to be appointed by the Prime Minister would be 12, so that there was a 12 to six split. The rectification in this Bill seems to run counter to the decisions made in July this year, and the Bill does not refer to the fact that the Local Government Act 1985 provided a different balance of governors. Will the Minister clarify that point?

Mr. Luce: The position is slightly confused by the fact that the Local Government Act 1985 included interim provisions that will not take effect until after 1 April next year. What we are seeking to do now, with the approval of the House, is to nullify the provisions of the 1985 Act which relate to the Museum of London after 1 April 1986. We are trying to alter a piece of legislation which in any event will not come into effect until 1 April. If the hon. Gentleman is not satisfied with that answer, I shall seek the leave of the House at the end of the debate to clarify the matter.

Clause 2 provides a fuller definition of the board of governors' powers, including its powers over property. It empowers the board to provide archaeological services and

[Mr. Luce]

to undertake archaeological investigations and research. All this is done by substituting new sections in place of the existing sections of the 1965 Act.

Clause 3 deals with the finance and provides that the Government and City should have an equal share in the main funding of the museum, in place of the current one third shares of the Government, City and GLC. Clause 3 supersedes the corresponding provisions of the Local Government Act.

Clause 4 enables the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission to make grants to the museum to assist it in providing archaeological services, separately from the main funding of the museum. Clauses 5 and 6 and the schedule cover expenses, the short title, commencement and repeals.

I have already mentioned the new funding arrangements. The increase in the Government's share — equivalent to about £700,000 on the basis of the present year's main budget for the museum—will be met from the £17 million set aside for museums, which is within the £43 million of extra central funding for the arts in 1986-87 following the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan county councils which I announced last week.

The Bill is also important for the future of rescue archaeology work in London. Of course, this work in London is not new. Perhaps archaeology was once thought to be of little relevance to the present, and could safely be left to the academics, but it is now an activity that engages the hearts and minds of many hundreds of people every year, young and old, many of them participating as volunteers. Archaeology is now seen as a way of knowing about and understanding how generations past used to live and work. It helps us to understand better how and why we got to where we are now. We excavate, record, conserve and learn.

Of course, all of this does not just happen. Somebody has to inspire, organise and co-ordinate, and find the money. For the past three years London has been particularly well served. The Greater London archaeology service, based at the Museum of London, has done all these things and it has earned a high respect in the process. The GLC has provided the necessary funds and has also continued the important task of grant-aiding individual rescue archaeology projects.

We have never been in any doubt about the importance of any of this work. Equally, we have never been in any doubt that the abolition of the GLC should not in itself signal the end of the Greater London archaeology service. In this we have been supported by the Museum of London and the many professional bodies concerned. Not least, we have been supported by the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission. The commission needs no introduction to this House, and its commitment to archaeology is well known. It spends not only some £3.5 million in support of rescue archaeology projects in the country as a whole, but also some £2 million on the work of its own excavation unit and contracts to universities and museums for scientific and conservation work and the storage of archives.

The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission is admirably well equipped to take over the GLC's involvement in and financial support for the Greater London archaeological service. It is a measure of the commission's commitment that it has readily agreed to take on the task. We now have to give the commission the power to grant-aid the Museum of London, so that it in turn may ensure that the Greater London archaeology service continues. Clause 4, and the corresponding clarification of the museum's powers in clause 2, meet the commitment given by the Government during the debate on the Local Government Act. That commitment was that we would include an extension of the commission's power to grant-aid archaeology work so that it could grant-aid the management and establishment costs of the Greater London archaeology service at the museum. The commission's annual grant from next year onwards will reflect these additional responsibilities.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to the Minister for his remarks about the GLC's contribution to the London archaeological service. Most Ministers find it hard to say anything nice about the GLC. I am intrigued about one aspect of the Bill. Clause 2 says that archaeological investigations and research can take place in Greater London and in the surrounding region. Can the Minister tell us how he sees the region outside Greater London? What is his definition of it?

Mr. Luce: My answer is probably right, but I am subject to correction. If I am wrong, I will try to put the matter right. In talking about the rescue service and specific projects, we are talking principally about the Greater London area as a whole. I will seek to clarify that at the end of the debate.

I hope that this rather full explanation of the purpose of the Bill has been helpful. The arrangements in the Bill are in the best interests of all concerned. The future of this excellent museum will be secure and its wide-ranging activities will continue to be of great benefit and value to all who live in, work in or visit our capital city.

7.15 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to have another look at this Bill. The Minister is aware that the hostility to the changes in local government in London is not diminished by this kind of attempt to cope with the difficulties in which the Government have landed many institutions in the metropolitan counties and the GLC. The Bill takes effect from April onwards, and the initial provisions leading up to April, which were rather different, will be rescinded.

As my hon. Friends have said, the whole proposition follows inevitably from the political pique with which the Government behaved towards London over the past two years leading up to the abolition of any proper government for the city. This attempt to deal with the situation is fraught with at least two major dangers. The first is that it almost entirely liquidates any kind of democratic control over the appointment of the governors of the Museum of London, certainly in relation to the people of London.

The previous structure fully recognised the nature of the museum. The old Guildhall museum was about the City of London. The combined museum was certainly that, but it was also a developing museum dedicated to the life, the work and the background of the people of London as a whole. In their wisdom, the Government have decided to wipe out London in that sense and also in the sense of the City's understanding of itself as a community with its own democratic government.

The three-way division between the GLC, the Government and the City of London, was a generous

recognition of the historic role of the City of London. Rather than the recognition that it was an area which could provide the best kind of governance for the museum, it was more or less a recognition of the peculiar and particular concept of the City which is so strange to people outside this country. This strange body, with all its medieval rites —and perhaps rights as well—is not necessarily the best body to look after the total museum. It is said that it is not necessarily remaining in the mists of antiquity, but is somehow representing the more recent life of the City.

We now have the extraordinary position that the people of London, through their democratic representatives, have no say on the board of governors of the City of London. It is left to appointments by the Government and by this curious body, the City of London. I come from north of the border, and I find the concept of the City of London as strange as do people from New Zealand, Equador or Australia.

I have carried out a little homework on the subject. The City is the last place in Britain that retains the archaic form of voting and representation that we used to call the business vote. There were long fights to establish the principle of one man, one vote, but we do not have one man, one vote in some of our institutions. At least in a democracy we have achieved that, but the same does not apply to the City.

The Corporation of London is unique among municipalities for its constitution, its 800 years of history and its somewhat exceptional powers and activities. It is composed of a mayor and commonalty and the citizens of the City of London. It is governed by the Court of Common Council, which consists of the lord mayor, 24 aldermen and 136 common councilmen.

It is a deliberative body and also a legislative assembly, and it can remodel its own constitution—which is more than the GLC can do. Aldermen are elected by ward motes. I am an old Anglo-Saxon scholar and I rather like that system of motes. It would be rather attractive if it could be extended to other areas. However, nobody can vote for a person unless he is already a freeman of the City. It is a curious situation that this body, which is to have a half say about the Museum of London, has 4,600 residents, and they will elect a council which will nominate governors. It also has 10,330 non-residents—the business vote. That is a ratio of more than two to one. Thus, the possibility of any democratic expression coming from the people living in the area is removed by the fact that the non-residents carry the bulk of the vote. That will be the new governance of the Museum of London.

There are ways of dealing with this matter. I am the last to try to destroy all historical vestiges. I believe that the concept of one third three times is too much and that we should have a small number of nominees to represent the ancient prerogatives and all that go with them. There are ways of dealing with the problem which could involve the people of London. They could be adopted during the unhappy, though short, future period until we return to power and restore proper government to London.

It was suggested in Committee on the Local Government Bill that ILEA could do the job. That idea was discarded, partly with contempt, when it was said that ILEA could not possibly speak for the people of London because it did not cover the whole area of London. We were told that important activities were provided for the benefit of the London region, the home counties and the hinterland which extended well beyond the boundaries of ILEA's jurisdiction. In other words, the responsibility could not be given to ILEA because it did not cover the whole of London or the hinterland.

It seems, however, that responsibility can be given to the City of London—at any rate, that half the governors can come from the small area of the City. That is nonsense. In Committee on this measure we should look again at the ILEA concept in this respect. As it is the nearest approach—it will also be an elected body from April — to a representative body for the people of London, and as it is integrally involved in the subject of the museum—the educational task of digging, recording and learning—it could fulfil the representative role in relation to the museum. Indeed, I cannot imagine a better definition of the process of education than to dig, record and learn. I hope, therefore, that we shall continue to consider ILEA as the representative body for the museum.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if we are to involve everyone in the running of the museum, logically we should have representatives of tourists and representatives from my constituency, which is in the home counties, and all sorts of other people? It is important to have an efficient system — one that represents the bodies that are providing the finance—and then allow the museum to do its work, which it does admirably.

Mr. Buchan: Nobody has argued that everybody should be represented. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) would take it amiss if I, from Glasgow, said that I wanted a say in the running of the Museum of London. I have said that running it should be a body that is representative of the people of London and that generously extends its activities to the home counties and the people who live there, such as the hon. Gentleman's constituents, and the hinterland.

We must strike a balance between having effective and democratic boards. We must have representative boards, but boards that can function. That is why I suggest that to achieve that the necessary appointments could be made to the ILEA.

If, as the Government said in Committee, we must pay due regard to the importance of the museum stretching its activities throughout the London region, we must consider some of the existing boroughs. Let us not forget that, in discussing the Local Government Bill, we were told that the GLC was being scrapped because it was an undemocratic body. It was to be replaced, we were told, by a marvellous democratic structure of the individual boroughs and district councils of London.

Here the Government have an opportunity to put their actions where their mouth is and involve some of the boroughs and districts. Those bodies could be asked to choose from among their members those who would represent the boroughs and districts. There would be no difficulty, except political pique, in doing that. It would be eminently sensible for the Government to do that, remembering that under the Local Government Bill the structures will be changing. I trust that that will also be examined in Committee. Our first complaint, therefore, is that the body that has been selected is not properly representative.

Mr. Murphy: The hon. Gentleman has not dealt with the essential point that I raised. It is the Museum of London, not just for London. There are many thousands

[Mr. Murphy]

of people from all parts of the United Kingdom, and further afield, who benefit from learning about the history of London. The hon. Gentleman is not getting the balance right.

Mr. Buchan: I look forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman moving amendments in Committee to get people from the hinterland and other areas round about on to the representative body. If he makes such a proposition, he will get a sympathetic hearing from my hon. Friends and me. We have here a Daniel come to judgment. Of course, it is not only a Museum of London, to be visited only by the people of London; people come from far and wide to learn from it.

If the Museum of London is to serve a purpose beyond those who live in the immediate area — and Greater London is a large area — we must consider another matter that is not dealt with in the Bill but which was raised in Committee on the Local Government Bill—namely, how free the museum will be in its actions on behalf of the people of London and the general public from near and far who visit it.

May we have a guarantee—I understand that in the past it has been left solely to the trustees; this has applied to museums and galleries—that the governors will not impose admission charges to this museum? Will the Government heed the advice of their supporters and not allow admission charges to be made?

We need to explore this question because the Government's record of admission charges at museums, galleries and some other national institutions has not been good, any more than the funding has been good. After all, the National Gallery had to be rescued by an American millionaire and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, because of a shortage of funding, had to be rescued by a £10,000 anonymous grant.

The Government are bringing shame on our national cultural institutions. It will help to redeem our honour if we say that no admission charges will be made at this museum, despite the fact that half the governors will come from the City of London. Indeed, their presence on that scale makes us fearful, for it represents the apotheosis of the cash nexus, and we fear that money will be valued more greatly than the establishment itself.

I stress that point because we have experience of what happens when charges are made. Curiously, the best example of that occurred at the Victoria and Albert museum. When the Prime Minister imposed admission charges—they were originally called voluntary charges; it was described as permissive legislation — certain changes in attendance came about at the Victoria and Albert. In January 1973, 91,000 people attended. In January 1974, in the first month of charges, the attendance figure dropped to 58,000—a fall of 36 per cent. In February 1973, 107,000 people attended. In February 1974, in the second month of charges, attendance dropped to 52,000—a collapse of 51·6 per cent. In March 1973, 130,000 attended. In March 1974, 66,000 people visited the Victoria and Albert—a collapse in attendance of 49 per cent.

Against that background, when we hear Conservative Members talk about the responsibilities and duties of the board of governors and the need to achieve a good board, we are concerned to avoid the portcullis of admission charges being imposed on this museum, be those charges so-called voluntary or otherwise.

I have spoken of some of the matters that we shall be discussing and pressing the Government about in Committee. I shall not ask my hon. Friends to vote against Second Reading. We recognise that this legislation flows from the far worse legislation on local government in general. As decent democrats, we shall consider this to be a consequence of that earlier legislation and try to rescue from the wreck something healthier in terms of the governance and funding of the Museum of London.

7.31 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Whether hon. Members share the view of Shelley that

"Hell is a city much like London"

or whether they prefer the alternative view of Dr. Johnson that

"When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life",

the importance of London in our nation's history can neither be denied nor exaggerated. I hope that the House will agree with a definition made by a former Member of the House, Benjamin Disraeli, when he described London as

"a nation, not a city".

London is our nation, and whatever part of the country we represent we are all Londoners. That is why, as a Hampshire Member of Parliament, I am happy to intervene in the debate.

The Minister said that the need for the Bill arises as a consequence of the abolition of the GLC. Under the Bill one of the three godfathers — or perhaps, in theatrical terms, one should call them "angels"—will be removed. It would be logical to close ranks and to concentrate on the two surviving "angels". However, following the points made by the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), I should like to ask the Minister why the London boroughs have not been given a place among the governors of the Museum of London. Is it Government policy in London and elsewhere that the metropolitan boroughs and district councils should take over the role of patrons of the arts, which hitherto has been fulfilled by the GLC and the metropolitan counties? I must declare an interest as I am a ratepayer in the City of Westminster. I hope that the Minister will reply and say why that option was rejected. The proportion of their representation among the governors should not necessarily be a third, but at least the boroughs should have a presence.

I have a great regard for the Museum of London, as I visit it and respect it well. I hope that all hon. Members who have visited the museum will agree with the accolade offered to it in 1982 by Kenneth Hudson, who said:

"The museum is now generally regarded as one of the finest city biography museums in the world".

Anyone who has been abroad and seen museums that purport to be similar would agree with that accolade. The Museum of London should be regarded not only as a fine city museum but as a national museum, and it is proper that there should be a financial arrangement between the local authorities in London and central Government.

We can argue about the precise balance, and the Bill suggests that it should be 50 per cent. each. All hon. Members will, I hope, agree that if, as I suggest, the London boroughs have a presence on the board of governors, they should make an appropriate financial

contribution. I suspect that the Minister expects them to do so, anyway. I hope that they will, although that is not written into the Bill.

We must consider how such a museum should be run. I offer the House the sound advice given to me a few years ago by the director of one of our national galleries, who said that any great gallery or museum has three main purposes. The first is to maintain and improve standards, especially that of conservation. Secondly, it should promote scholarship and, thirdly, stage spectacle. Obviously, the fulfilment of those three objectives — standards, scholarship and spectacle — interplay upon each other. The balance of resources devoted to each will not only vary from one gallery or museum to another but will also vary within the same institution from time to time according to current requirements. In any board of governers such as the board of governers of the Museum of London, professional qualifications in the three objectives that I have mentioned should be reflected in the people nominated by the representative bodies.

Professionally, it is important that people within a great gallery or museum should have among them people to whom they can look for a lead. I can think of many people associated with art, archaeology, architecture and history, both political and social, who would be delighted if they were invited to give their services. That suggests to me that the Government and the City of London must be imaginative in formulating whom they invite to join.

Professionalism should be present among the governors as well as democratic representation, and there is no quarrel between myself and the hon. Member for Paisley, South on that score.

I also submit that the duties of such governors, both corporately and individually, require certain other skills. There are three that the House should consider. The first is supervision, although that is normally the day-to-day task of the staff of any museum or gallery. But in a week in which we had the sad news of what happened to the Algardi terracotta bust of Cardinal Zacchia in the Victoria and Albert museum — I doubt whether even the hon. Member for Paisley, South would claim that it should be paid for by voluntary charges — that makes my point about the need for supervision.

Mr. Buchan: Had the museum administration perhaps been more sound, with only one man going up the ladder and one of the two people who sit at the damned cash boxes standing at the bottom, we might have saved that terracotta bust.

Sir David Price: The hon. Gentleman is stretching his well-known views somewhat beyond what even a bust would carry—and a terracotta one at that.

The second skill is the ability to select. As is often the case with all good things, we can write down a range of priorities which in an ideal world we can pursue to the ultimate, but at any moment in time selection and balance is required. That would allow us to bring together the professionals so that we can get the balance right.

The third is inspiration. The governors of any institution must be known not only to the staff but also to the public, and the staff and the public must look to the board of the Museum of London for such inspiration. I am an old-fashioned soldier in these matters and believe in leading from the front. Therefore, the governors have a duty not only to attend board meetings and to be available in their own professions as scholars, but also to be seen and to be known. In effect, they are the embodiment of the museum. I hope that the bodies which appoint the governors will pay regard to those thoughts.

There are four outstanding problems facing the Museum of London. The first is the absence of a capital fund. On 21 October 1981, in evidence to the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, the Museum of London said:

> "It should be noted . . . that the Museum of London Act makes no provision for the Board to raise capital. It would be necessary, therefore, either for one of the contributing authorities to take on this burden, or for the sum to be raised by appeal".

The museum repeated the point later in its submission when it said:

> "The capital and resource requirements are considerable. The Board have no power to raise capital and apparently little chance of persuading one of the contributing authorities to take on this function."

We should take the opportunity of the Bill to insist that, in one way or another, the museum should be equipped with capital-raising powers and, I hope, a capital fund. We all know that the ultimate masters in these matters are the Treasury mandarins. As it is early in the evening, I put no adjective in front of the words, but if it were later in the evening I could. The Treasury is never keen on capital because, as everyone knows, the Treasury mandarins are simple people, used to computer-based zero and one, and think purely in terms of cash flow—money going in and out. I have said before, and I repeat it about this issue, that the Treasury power is like having one's affairs run not by accountants but by book-keepers. The money is in and out on an annual cash flow. We must try to preserve the museum from the limitations of Treasury thinking, and equip it with some capital.

The second point, which comes out clearly in one report after another, is shortage of storage space. That again ties up with the size of building accommodation, but is itself a product of success because the more that a museum achieves, particularly with rescue archaeology, the more that it has to hand. The more that a museum is known and the more that the public institutions offer it objects the more obviously it has to have extra storage space.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman is making a characteristically thoughtful contribution. Does he not feel that one of the problems in the museum service generally is that museums store far too much? Is there not an advantage in having a shortage of space because it makes museums far more selective in what they take, and perhaps forces them to display far more? Is it not a shame that there is so much hidden away in vaults that people never see?

Sir David Price: I agree with the hon. Member in part. We all know of galleries that have far too much hidden away when more should be on display. However, there is a grey area between what a museum obviously has to accept and what it obviously has to reject, and this particularly arises in rescue archaeology, out of which flow many representative objects. One does not wish to flood a gallery.

Let us take an example. In the British museum, those of us who are not experts on Greek pottery can still see an enormous number of Greek pots, but we do not necessarily want to see them all on display. However, the museum is keen to show them. I can see that in any gallery there is

[Sir David Price]

a problem of a certain largesse de richesse; but since the objects are valuable, one cannot just refuse or dismiss them.

The national galleries gain enormous advantage from the system of loans to the provincial galleries. I do not know the details of what is in store in the Museum of London, or whether it can be loaned to other museums in the outer London area that could benefit. If this is the policy that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is advocating, I agree with it.

My third point is about the pace of rescue archaeology. I quote again from the report of the Museum of London. It says:

"The pace of field archaeology is largely outside the Museum's control, in that it is determined by the state of the office property market and by other major developments such as gravel extraction and road construction."

In other words, it is difficult for a museum such as the Museum of London to plan its field archaeology because so much of it is rescue archaeology, which is determined by other people. The museum may have only a few months in which to do its work. It may have to move people from an existing project to get them on to a site on which they have only a short time for excavation.

Although this is a general problem, it is seen particularly vividly in the case of the Museum of London. I should be interested in the thoughts of my hon. Friend the Minister on this. I am glad that he is making arrangements for adequate financial support for rescue archaeology in London. Nevertheless, it is difficult to plan properly, given the uncertain nature of what has to be done.

My fourth point flows from my third. The recording of change in London life should also be contemporary. I again report from the museum's literature. It says:

"changes in other less publicised areas of London life are taking place which will lead to the obliteration of evidence of how London is now as completely as new office blocks will destroy the remains of the Roman period. At the moment, the only official provision to record the changing face of London, apart from the work of the Museum itself, is the recording of architectural monuments through the Royal Commission and the Historic Buildings Division of the Greater London council. That is the state that rescue archaeology was in fifteen years ago."

I have already discussed with my hon. Friend the Minister the example of the move of the old Covent garden market to the Nine Elms site. I have been told that the architecture is well documented but that the Department has not had the resources to get down the impressions of the people who worked and traded there. Such social history is most important and, with tape recorders, relatively cheap to record.

Another market moving has been Billingsgate. The old one has gone and we know from our experience with the Covent garden market that the environment and the atmosphere of the new market are different. Such things should be recorded, and it is relatively cheap so to do, but, because of lack of staff and resources, they are not so recorded.

I leave my four points, about the absence of the capital fund, the shortage of storage space, tying up with loans to other galleries, the pace of rescue archaeology, which makes planning difficult, and the recording of contemporary changing of London life, with my hon. Friend the Minister. I have detained the House too long, particularly for a Hampshire Member. I have said enough. I wish the Bill well, and the Museum of London even better.

7.47 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having called me, although I am aware that you have little choice.

I welcome the Minister to his first arts debate. These are rare occurrences and perhaps I should remind him that the fact that there are not double figures of attendance is not unusual. On the last occasion on which we had an arts debate, which was conveniently held on the day of the European elections, the Government suffered a humiliating defeat, by two votes to one, but went on governing none the less.

I listened with interest to the speeches made by the hon. Members for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) and for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price). I share the concern about charging for museum entrance and I was much taken with the sensible remarks of the hon. Member for Eastleigh about governing museums, although I am not sure whether ultimately some of the work that he prescribed for the governors is not best done by the curators. However, I shall not take up the hon. Gentleman on that point.

The Bill is necessary to tidy up a small part of the chaos created by the abolition of the GLC, and it has three main elements—the composition of the board, the finance of the museum, and the archaeological services. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I have legitimate concerns about all three of these points.

It is proposed to change the board's composition from three parts of six members to two parts of nine members, representing the City and the Prime Minister. What is predominantly wrong with that is that it increases the Prime Minister's patronage, and I think that she has quite enough power already. It could well serve to exclude the genuinely popular base that the museum has worked to cultivate. It includes no formal recognition of the legitimate interests of London as a whole in its own museum.

The museum has a constituency of about 8·5 million Londoners. They cannot be subsumed into the City or whomever is selected by the Prime Minister. The Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, in Committee on the Local Government Bill, when arguing against the inclusion of the Inner London education authority on the board, which the ILEA would in fact have been unpleased to accept, claimed that the activities of the museum went far beyond those of ILEA. I do not believe that that point is adequately catered for by the proposals contained in the Bill. Further, I do not see how that proposal fits in which the Government's announced desire to devolve power to the boroughs as part of the reason for abolishing the GLC. We all know the reason why the Government wanted to abolish the GLC, and it was not that.

Above all, the GLC's abolition severs all formal relationship with the whole of Greater London, and I believe that an alternative is needed which will protect that status. Even if the proposals on composition are to stand, the question of how the nominees will be selected remains.

What the hon. Member for Eastleigh said was important. Not only people who have a knowledge of selection, history and archeology are needed, but also people who can stand up to the Government and argue, and

people who have financial knowledge, perhaps divorced from all specific museum knowledge. I should like to know whether they will be chosen as members of a larger constituency. What is more important, how does the Bill ensure that the museum continues to work for the whole of London?

On finance, the Bill proposes a change from equal one third shares from each group represented on the board to equal halves. During the interim, the City has been contributing one third to the Government's two thirds. The Government's share comes from the Office of Arts and Libraries and will come from the money pledged to help replace what disappears with the GLC. I heard what the Minister said, but I want him to say clearly whether that is new money or whether that £700,000 was considered in the ball park figure for museums, or was it merely taken out of that general figure when it was realised that the Museum of London would need such an amount of money? Will the Minister tell me whether the City can afford that 50 per cent? Has it told the Minister that it can do so? What is the 50 per cent. half of? Will it be half of whatever sum the board deems to be necessary, or will the board be able to budget for only twice what the Government decide as its figure?

I believe that museums need stability of funding, and am not sure that under the suggested formula it will get it. What type of financial security is the Minister promising, given that the amount to cover for abolition is set to decrease over the coming years? The proposed set-up is potentially damaging to the idea of accountability and the system of local attachment that existed before.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is not for me to come springing to the Minister's defence, but in a way, the procedure whereby the Museum of London has been funded up to now was unsatisfactory because it had three bodies. The two always came in at the lowest bid, which would be the bid of the third. That was unsatisfactory for the Museum of London. It did not have the certainty over its funds that it should perhaps have had.

Mr. Freud: If one brings forth new legislation, one might bear in mind how unsatisfactory was the previous legislation and try to do better.

I understand that having only two partners could be fractionally better than having three, but I am still not convinced that asking the City of London to pay 50 per cent. is meaningful in the way that it is phrased.

The proposals are at odds with the Government's professed handing down of powers and responsibility to the boroughs where we were told they belonged. What are the provisions in respect of the museum's capital needs? If the Liberal party's alternative on the composition of the board were to materialise, we would make the appropriate adjustments to the funding. We believe in a relationship between taxation and representation. The hon. Member for Paisley, South talked about that. When he talked about one man, one vote, he clearly forgot what went on in the trade unions of which he is so fond. I should have thought that that would have been a strong argumemt for keeping quiet.

I wish to talk about archaeology, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) pressed the Government several times during the passage of the Local Government Bill. He was worried that the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, to which the archaeological service seemed destined, was unsuitable because it was new and untried and designed to fund projects rather than organisations.

As I understand the Bill, the archaeological service will go to the Museum of London and the HBMC will be allowed to make grants to it under conditions chosen by the commission. Several questions arise. Is the HMBC to pay for all the unit's work, only specific projects or only those bits that it chooses? What will become of the permanent nature of the unit which is now intimately linked with the museum's entire work? Will that be adequately maintained? If the HMBC is not intended to pay for all the unit's work, presumably the rest is supposed to come from the extra Government money that we heard about last week. How much will that double earmarking leave for the rest of the museum's work? Was that extra cost taken into consideration when the extra money was being allocated? There are currently about 100 archaeologists employed by the unit. Will that substantial and respected organisation be adequately provided for by the Bill? What conditions will be attached to the grant? How long term is the deal?

We are seeking more information and substantial guarantees that the museum and the archaeological unit will not be casualties of the chaos following the GLC's abolition. It should be remembered that the GLC intervened in the case of the archaeology unit in 1982 only because there was erratic funding from other sources which could not sustain it with certainty.

London is said to have one of the best archaeological presences of any capital city. That must be sustained. We are interested in retaining the regional links that the museum has had by virtue of its board and funding. That has been essential to its nature.

The Minister said that the museum is secure. Over the years we have heard from the Government that the National Health Service is safe with them.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): And it is.

Mr. Freud: They have said that the arts need not worry. I had a maternity hospital at Wisbech, in my constituency. The Minister for Health came to my constituency and said that the maternity hospital was safe. After the election it was closed.

I hope that the Minister, whom I wish well, and for whom I have great respect, will write to me on some of the points that I have mentioned and will remember that, all in all, museums need endowments and guarantees of secure financial provision rather than enthusiasm on a Monday which wanes on Tuesday and disappears at the end of the week.

8 pm.

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn, Hatfield): The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) claimed after my interventions that I accepted his argument, and therefore wanted a wider range of governors. Had he listened less selectively, he would have realised that logically my reasoning still pointed to the opposite as more realistic. I repeat for the hon. Gentleman's benefit that it is the Museum of London and not the museum for London. Home counties visitors, such as those from my constituency, would prefer effective management as the criterion rather than artificial geographical appointments.

[Mr. Christopher Murphy]

The hon. Member for Paisley, South once again dogmatically criticised admission charges and cited the Victoria and Albert museum. In contrast, I should welcome such an approach, as exemplified by Sir Roy Strong, as a more realistic one. If it is to be the Museum of London rather than just for London, why should it not benefit from all its patrons, be they from home or abroad, to help ensure its future success?

Mr. Tony Banks: The museum is about London, which makes it perhaps more relevant for Londoners than other museums within the capital. When the hon. Gentleman is encouraging the imposition of charges, or voluntary charges, is he aware that the Museum of London runs a large education programme? It receives large parties of visitors from the area which he represents, as well as from inner London. It would be a disadvantage to have charges, voluntary or otherwise, as their imposition could very well restrict schoolchildren's opportunities to visit the museum.

Mr. Murphy: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that in many charging schemes there are exceptions made for schoolchildren and the elderly. Such schemes often provide the opportunity free days. All these features should be considered. Anything that increases the finance that is available to safeguard our galleries and museums should be applauded by us all. Such matters should not become the subject of partisan and dogmatic arguments.

The Bill is further evidence of the commitment to the arts and heritage that has been so apparent since the Government came to power in 1979. Against a background of economic difficulty, the cultural sector has been well provided for. That should be appreciated fully rather than denigrated unfairly because of political malice.

Those who have visited the Museum of London will have been impressed by its dedication and its flair for giving London a unique historical perspective. It is a tribute to both the Government and the Corporation of the City of London that the importance of the museum is being reinforced and enhanced by the Bill.

I had the privilege recently of piloting a report through the choppy seas of the Council of Europe on the private sponsorship of the arts. Despite scuttling attempts by certain Left-wing would-be boarding parties, the recommendations gained safe haven although squalls continued beyond the harbour. Saint Saens once said:

"Art is a mystery—something which responds to a special sense, peculiar to the human race."

That is equally the case with the appreciation of the heritage. The Museum of London is a part of that appreciation, together with its excellent archaeological services.

The report which I presented to the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe surveyed the value of private sponsorship and the increasing significance that it can and should achieve. My recommendations called for greater encouragement of private sponsorship. Europe would do well to follow the lead of the Government, my hon. Friend the Minister and his predecessors.

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Gentleman has spoken of his recommendation of greater private sponsorship and has congratulated the Government on their performance—a Government who are beginning to accept private sponsorship as a replacement for proper public funding and not as an adjunct to and support of it. Last week's statement on the funding of the arts was a disgrace. The Government's proposals are about £25 million short of what the Arts Council said that it needed and about £19 million short of what was needed to replace the moneys made available by the metropolitan counties and the GLC. In terms of central overall funding, they represented a 16 per cent. loss. There is no great merit in increasing private subsidy percentage by percentage if we are allowing the basic fabric of our national institutions and the rest of our culture to decay under the cuts that they are suffering under the hon. Gentleman's Government.

Mr. Murphy: I regret that once again the hon. Gentleman seems to be using his selective hearing. Surely he has heard, as I have, many Ministers say that there is such a thing as plural funding. I understand that that is what my hon. Friend the Minister wants to see for the arts and heritage. I recall from statements made to the House that the Government's spending on the arts has increased in real terms. That should be the subject of congratulation and not criticism.

I have referred to the report I piloted through the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe, and the hon. Gentleman should be aware that some of his colleagues who sit on the Labour Benches in this place voted at one stage in favour of the report and later were against it. There is a necessity for some of his hon. Friends to get their thinking straight on this important subject for the sake of the arts and the heritage. I am sure that he will take these points on board in the friendliest fashion.

The City of London holds a unique place in both British and world history. It is one that is told effectively by the Museum of London. The City of London holds a unique place also in both British and world finance. It is one that is clear with respect to commerce and business, often the very companies that are providing vital sponsorship.

In supporting the Bill, I do so in recognition of the continuing value of museums such as the Museum of London to the cultural life of the country and to its economic life in terms of the tourist industry. In supporting the Government in their arts and heritage policies, I do so in recognition that a fair wind has been created that is far more realistic than the unwarranted and continual hoisting of storm cones by Opposition parties.

8.8 pm

Dr. John D. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I offer my sincere congratulations to my hon. Friend the Minister on his new appointment. His baptism was enshrined in a fine presentation of the Bill, a measure which on sober reflection will, I am sure, eventually be welcomed by those on both sides of the House.

I shall refer to two statements which have a great bearing and significance on and to the Museum of London. My hon. Friend has related with considerable clarity the excellence of the paper that he presented in Spain. I am glad that the Government have recently signed a Council of Europe convention on the protection of the heritage. That is good news for the heritage, culture and the museum service. The European conference focused on ways in which the heritage could be protected and conserved. The purpose of this debate is to present that information to the public.

Last Thursday, as reported at column 702, my hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts announced that the Government would grant £43 million extra from the Exchequer to make up the shortfall caused by the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan councils.

I was especially attracted to the excellent contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), particularly his reference to the governing bodies. The Bill provides for the Corporation of the City of London to make nine appointments to the Board. Nine appointments are within the Prime Minister's gift, as outlined in clause 1. That is the way forward for this excellent museum.

I believe from my recent experiences in the museum that the Bill presents a tremendous opportunity to take a further step forward, especially with respect to archaeological rescue, research and display. I was privileged in the past two weeks to go to York where I saw an excellent display. I hope that the City of London will hold such an exhibition.

I am sad that the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) bitterly attacked the City of London. It was not in keeping with the normally gracious and charitable way in which he presents the case for the Opposition. I am sure that in the depth of his soul he has as much love for Paisley abbey as I have. I hope that we can convert him to the beauties of the City of London.

There has been considerable debate on clause 3. The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) referred to the long-term and short-term funding guarantees that should be given. I unashamedly say to my hon. Friend the Minister that I wish to associate myself with those remarks. I hope that my hon. Friend will respond.

Conservative Members have become dedicated disciples of the concept of funding for the arts by the private sector. It would be a privilege to see those items that are stored in the bowels of the museum, which the public hardly ever see. I believe that 70 per cent. or 80 per cent. of the exhibits are never put on display except in travelling exhibitions. I believe that certain items owned by the museum of London and the other museums could, with satisfactory security facilities, be put on display and be sponsored privately by companies and institutions. Excellent exhibitions have resulted from sponsorship of the arts by the public sector, as we have seen in Manchester.

I am sure that hon. Members have noted the new vision and enthusiasm in archaeology. One is almost tempted to use the expression "the industry" of archaeology. I do not represent London or the home counties, but I know that many of my constituents on visits to London are delighted with what they see in the Museum of London. Their visit is also educational. Recently, some archaeological work was done in the constituency which I have the honour and privilege to represent. Work has been conducted at Montgomery castle, Stafford castle and in the celestial town of Dudley at Dudley castle. I believe that discoveries in those areas could eventually find a place in the museum of London.

I wish the Bill godspeed. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh and the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East I wish the museum of London continued success. It is a jewel in our heritage.

8.18 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Bill is yet one further consequence of the abolition of the GLC — not a matter of major significance, given the problems associated with abolition, but an important one. Clearly a number of hon. Members note the museum's significance in terms of London's cultural heritage. The Bill to abolish the GLC, which will mean the ending of nearly 100 years of citywide local government in London, was forced through Parliament to satisfy the Prime Minister's personal wishes.

I shall not allow the House to escape without hearing me say a few more words about the GLC's abolition, which is a subject about which I feel deeply. Abolition was opposed by all independent, objective and authoritative sources. More importantly, it was opposed, and remains opposed, by an overwhelming majority of Londoners.

In Britain today, with the elective dictatorship in full cry, such considerations count for nothing in the mind of the Prime Minister, whose vindictive response to the Labour administration at county hall is best summed up in the words of the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who said on 14 March 1984:

> "The Labour party is the party of division. In its present form it represents a threat to the democratic values and institutions on which our parliamentary system is based.
>
> The GLC is typical of this new, modern, divisive version of socialism. It must be defeated. So we shall abolish the GLC."

That is the truth of the matter. To base such sweeping changes in the structure of local government in England on an act of party political spite vividly reveals the depths to which the modern Conservative party has sunk.

The Bill represents one of the less traumatic consequences of the abolition of the GLC, but the same cannot be said for the overall impact on the arts in London. No one can accurately predict the scale of damage to the arts, but equally no one can deny that the arts will be the poorer for the abolition of the GLC.

The hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) paid tribute to the Minister when he said that the Government had provided an extra £43 million from the Exchequer to take up the shortfall through abolition. That is not new money, and the hon. Gentleman must be aware of the fact.

It is not sufficient either, because the Arts Council estimated that about £44 million was required to replace all the GLC and metropolitan county council expenditure on the arts. The Government have offered £25 million. There is a £19 million shortfall. There is no way in which local authorities, either boroughs in London or districts in the rest of the metropolitan areas, will be able to make up that shortfall. They are penalised and many of them are rate-capped because they are Labour authorities. In the circumstances, one cannot be optimistic about the future of the arts following abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties.

The Minister and his predecessor have given more than they set out to give and we should be thankful for it, but we do not have to be grateful because that money will not replace that which is presently expended by the GLC and the metropolitan counties on the arts. We acknowledge that more has been provided that was previously envisaged, but one does not have to be grateful because a lot more than that has been taken away.

The arts in London are threatened by the abolition of the GLC. The threat runs from the GLC South Bank to

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theatres such as the riverside, the Half Moon and the Theatre Royal, Stratford. Their future is fraught with dangers and uncertainties. Regional parks such as Burgess park and Mile End park are being developed by the GLC. There is no way that they will be completed by their respective boroughs of Southwark and Tower Hamlets because the resources are not there. After all, why should boroughs fund out of their own ratepayers' resources facilities that benefit the region as a whole? They will say that it is something for London as a whole and that London should pay for it. They will say, "How can we, with our scant resources, pay for facilities for the rest of London?" That is a natural human approach that any council would adopt when faced with the financial strictures imposed by central Government.

The classic example of the Government's irresponsibility with regard to abolition is seen in the confusion that surrounds waste disposal in London. Some might say that it is tangential to the Bill. If hon. Members spent more time going round the Museum of London, they would see exhibits showing the way in which the capital city's pattern of waste disposal has developed over the years. We owe a great deal to the Victorians in London for their foresight, skill and ingenuity. We have been living off that for far too long. What worries me is that we are squandering assets we inherited and not building on them. But that is another economic argument about infrastructure. From whatever point one starts, one can always come back to where one wishes.

All informed opinion inside and outside the waste disposal industry has paid tribute to the efficiency of the GLC's operation, one of the biggest and best in the world. However, 133 days are left until the sad demise of the GLC. I am sure that hon. Members will have noticed that we have put up a poster over County hall with the countdown to zero day. With 133 days left, we still do not have a satisfactory arrangement for waste disposal in London. Perhaps people will not be excited by that. It is not the sexiest of political issues, but it would be a matter of great concern to all of us if we found that there was chaos and confusion surrounding waste disposal.

Mr. Murphy: I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman's argument, but there are two things that concern me that he does not seem to want to explain. One is that the abolition of the GLC was put clearly to the people of London, who helped to elect the Conservative Government. He seems to dismiss the democratic element, which I am surprised about. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman exhibits great concern, as I think we all do, about safeguarding the arts and our heritage in our capital city, yet pushes to one side the obvious means by which extra finance can be obtained—private sponsorship of the arts and admission charges. If we are all genuinely interested in safeguarding the arts and our heritage, we should look for other ways in which to bring in that finance. To help us, will the hon. Gentleman comment on both issues?

Mr. Banks: Of course. I do not believe that the abolition of the GLC motivated voters throughout the country to vote for the Conservative Government, so I do not see how the abolition of the GLC should be so central to the Government's programme, whereas the abolition of the rating system, which the Prime Minister also pushed forward as a manifesto pledge in 1979, should be abandoned.

It must be made clear that abolition of the GLC is not supported by the majority of Londoners. All that we have said throughout is that, if the Government feel that the GLC is such a markedly unpopular institution, let the people of London decide at the ballot box. The hon. Gentleman may recall that there was nothing in the 1983 Conservative manifesto about abolition of the GLC elections, yet that was pushed through the House by use of the elective dictatorship. I cannot believe that many people in London would have voted for that if it had been spelt out in the Conservative manifesto.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to private sponsorship of the arts. As a former chairman of the arts and recreation committee of the GLC, I did not spurn the opportunity to get my hands on a bit of capitalist gold. I can assure the hon. Gentleman of that. Equally, I was realistic enough to know that it never could, and never will, replace disinterested public investment, sponsorship and financing of the arts. The hon. Gentleman and some of his colleagues place too great store by the amount of money that the arts can raise through private sponsorship. It can be a top-up, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) has said, it seems that many Conservative Members are beginning to see private sponsorship as the major source of funding for the arts, not just topping on the cake, as it were.

I could go on at great length and with increasing enthusiasm about the case to be made against the Government abolishing the GLC. Suffice it to say that anyone who claims that abolishing the GLC will improve the efficiency of local government in London or the quality of life of its citizens is either a bigot or a fool.

The most objectionable element in the Bill is clause 1, amending the Museum of London Act 1965. One of the veterans of the Committee on the Local Government Bill, the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), wandered into the Chamber a little while ago. He heard some of the arguments and then quickly retreated, which was a pity, because we had a good debate in Committee. In Committee both the Labour and Liberal parties were agreed that the City corporation was not appropriate to represent the interests either of London as a whole or of democratic local government in London. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) spelt out some of our objections, and he could have mentioned many more of them. When the Royal Commission was reporting on the lead-up to the Local Government Act 1963 it said that logic had its limits and the City of London lay outside of them. It certainly does in local government terms.

My hon. Friend mentioned the business vote, which has been abolished everywhere except for the City, and aldermen, who have been abolished elsewhere in local government except in the City. Worse still, they are elected for life. If I had risen from my usual Back Bench position, to which I shall depart soon after my speech, and had maintained that GLC members should be elected for life, there would have been a hint of opposition from Tory Members. Clearly, the City is not the appropriate repository of responsibility for the Museum of London.

The museum is primarily concerned with the history of London and Londoners. If the corporation and the Government share the costs, there will be a natural

tendency for the definition of London to be narrowed towards the one square mile and its immediate environs, rather than expanded. Anyone who knows the history of London recognises that that one square mile is rich in history, but incomplete, if one wishes to show the history of the London area covered by today's GLC.

The presence of governors on the board, who are nominated by the GLC, has provided that essential Londonwide dimension to the affairs of the museum I well remember my first visit, as the chair of the GLC arts and recreation committee, when I commented on the lack of exhibits relating to the history of London's trade union movement. The director said that he thought I would raise that point. That is not good enough. Too often we ignore the history of the working class whose skills and suffering have provided the basis on which the enormous wealth of our City rests.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will my hon. Friend pay warm tribute to the Labour History Museum which is doing an excellent job preserving the important records of the Labour movement? The sad thing about the working class is that, having spent a great deal of time acquiring their own records, they hide them away or allow them to moulder. Would it not be nice to get an input of state money for something as important as that?

Mr. Banks: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend, especially when one considers the museums in London, such as the war museum, the natural history museum, the British museum and the science museum, and their resources. Why do we not have a nationally funded national museum of labour, because it is on the efforts and skills of labour that the wealth of the country is based? When, in two or three years' time, my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South is the Minister with responsibility for the arts, I hope that he will remember this evening and ensure that funds are available. I am sure that we shall be present to remind him.

Since that visit, things have improved at the museum in respect of my criticism. I join the Minister in paying tribute to the director, Max Hebditch, and his staff, and particularly to the governors, whom the GLC nominated to it. They are Mr. John Gorman, Sir Ashley Bramall, Mr. Willie Bell, who is a solid Right-wing Conservative member of the GLC—we are ecumenical in that sense—Mr. Louis Bondy, Mr. Michael Wheeler, another Conservative member of the GLC and Mr. Richard Nicholls. When they have gone, will the museum slip back to its previous limited vision of London's history? Since Ministers will make the nominations, will the Minister tell me when he replies whether he will consider keeping on some of those governors, who have contributed so much to the museum?

If the museum is to be for the whole of London and to maintain links with the truly democratic structure of local government in London, governors should come from the broader local government structures of London, for example from the Inner London education authority. Indeed, is there any reason why they should not come from the two main borough groupings—the London Boroughs Association and the Association of Labour Authorities? The hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) said that the boroughs should be represented, and I hope that the Minister will consider the views being put to him this evening, and that in Committee we can write them into the Bill. That is important, and we shall wish to press for it.

One of the more intriguing aspects of abolition has been the way in which the City corporation has been prepared to assume Londonwide responsibilities, almost as though it is trying to build insurance policies against the future. It is not yet settled which authority will assume responsibility for Hampstead Heath, but the City was at one stage keen to have it within its area of responsibility. The City has taken over the London Public Record Office, and, clearly, will take over the London end of the Museum of London. Recently, when, as chairman of the GLC, I addressed the Court of Common Council in the Guildhall, I remarked on how intriguing it was to see the City assuming Londonwide responsibilities.

The Opposition believe that the City, as it is presently constituted, cannot and must not be the voice of London. It is important to people in London because after abolition, London will be the only capital city in western Europe without a citywide administration and voice. The corporation is neither qualified nor authorised to speak for the boroughs and the 7 million people, as the GLC does now, however rich are its history and traditions.

I marvel at the City's ability to survive. One can learn many lessons from it, and sometimes I wish that we had learnt them at County hall. But the City knows that the abolition of the GLC threatens its long-term future in terms of its boundaries and structures. As the last chairman of the GLC, for the time being, I look forward to the day when I shall attend the great show of the new lord mayor of all London elected by a Court of Common Council, itself elected by a universal franchise of Greater London voters. My hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South suggests that he might be me, but he most certainly will not be me. I have had my work cut out during the past two years trying to keep things together at County hall, and I shall be glad to lay down that burden. However, I shall certainly look forward to the day when there will be a lord mayor who can speak for all of London, not for the few thousand people in the square mile.

That cannot be done on the present structure of the City of London, which is why this part of the Bill is so objectionable. When the Court of Common Council represents all 7 million Londoners and the lord mayor is the lord mayor of all London, the City will have fulfilled its historic destiny, which it repudiated on three separate occasions during the 19th century. The City managed to see off Mr. Gladstone, but I do not believe that it will see off Prime Minister Kinnock. We cannot accept that the City of London and the Government should carve up the running of the Museum of London between them and, in Committee, we shall press for an alternative.

One sees clearly that the Government's share of the funding will go up by one third to one half and that increased Government financial support will come from the money earmarked for abolition costs. But will this money be fully earmarked? Will it be fully guaranteed? This money will come out of the £17 million provided for museums. Will the Government's contribution come out of the £17 million—the money that they spend now and their share of the GLC—or only from what they are taking from the GLC? This is a nice point, but it is crucial to museums and art galleries throughout London and the

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metropolitan county councils. I hope that the Minister will say that only the extra amount is to come out of the £17 million, and not the total Government contribution.

How will future moneys be settled? Will there be an annual settlement? Will the arrangement be similar to the present system when the Government and the City of London treasurers sit down and work out between them what they can afford? Whoever can afford to pay the least will effectively determine what the others pay. That is the way it works at the moment and that is why, in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), I said that it is an unsatisfactory arrangement. The arrangement has some weaknesses at the moment but the hon. Gentleman is quite right to say that the Bill gives the Minister the opportunity to improve matters, perhaps by introducing greater certainty regarding the funding of the Museum of London.

Can the museum expect to receive levels of funding similar to those currently provided by the GLC or will the Government be looking for some reductions?

I wish now to comment on a couple of points raised by the hon. Member for Eastleigh. The first is the absence of a capital fund for the Museum of London. Funding bodies just provided revenue grants to the museum. Not having a capital fund was a disadvantage. How many museums have capital funds at the moment? Where would they get the capital assets from?

The GLC wanted to endow museums and art galleries with a capital fund, but local authorities had enormous difficulties with their own capital allocations. We were able to increase the revenue grant to arts bodies but we always had a problem on the capital side.

The hon. Member for Eastleigh mentioned the shortage of space. One reason for the shortage of space at the Museum of London is that it is an island site and there is little room to expand unless it moves into the Barbican. The Museum of London might have been better sited somewhere else, where there was room to expand, where the land was somewhat cheaper, where access was better and where the site was more central.

Sir David Price: In county hall.

Mr. Banks: It would be better used as a museum for London than as a hotel patronised by wealthy American tourists.

Mr. Murphy: That would bring in more money for the arts.

Mr. Banks: I do not believe that turning the South Bank into a hotel complex would bring more money into the arts. I do not think that tourists will keep coming to London to look at other hotels. We must try to preserve the arts that we have and not dismantle them, which I fear will be one of the consequences of abolition.

Museums tend to be greedy when it comes to storage space. They snap up items even if they do not have space to exhibit the material. There is probably more material not on display than on display. It is a matter of growing concern for people interested in the museum service.

The hon. Member for Eastleigh also mentioned oral history. The GLC had a wonderful exhibition at the royal festival hall at which we encouraged Londoners to record history on tape. There was a marvellous take-up by our elderly citizens. They wanted to sit there and talk, and they produced a wonderfully valuable resource. Through the Minister, the Government should be prepared to devote far more resources to strengthening and developing oral history, because that is how to record the history of ordinary men and women, whether in the city or in the country. Our history tends to be about victories of great generals, kings and queens, rather than those who carried the burdens upon which those victories were built.

Sir David Price: I took the examples of Covent garden and Billingsgate. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, when asked what life was like when they were six or seven years old, elderly people tend to ramble? However, if the interviewer concentrates on an event or an experience, such as asking what it was like unloading ships with a hook and tackle, he will get a much more specific reply. That was my point, as, with such questions, much of the architecture and political history is recorded. It is social history of which we are so short.

Mr. Banks: The imperial war museum is good at that. One does not invite somebody to ramble on with a microphone under their nose but has skilled people directing an interview, because they know what information they are trying to get. Such a process produces enormously valuable historical information.

Most hon. Members will agree that some of the most interesting history is that recorded in diaries. Diaries written by ordinary people about day-to-day events are universally popular because we can relate to the authors far more than to massive battles and great state occasions of which few of us have much experience.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Eastleigh mentioned Covent garden again. I hope he will pay due tribute to the GLC for its restoration of Covent garden. We saved it from the previous Conservative Administration which wanted to raze it to the ground and turn it into a national exhibition centre surrounded by six-lane highways. Covent garden is now one of the most thriving tourist centres in London. It might be getting a little too twee for my liking, but the GLC has managed to preserve it. Problems will arise with Covent garden as Westminister and Camden, two local authorities that are poles apart politically and ideologically, try to run it—another problem arising out of the abolition of the GLC.

I do not want to detain the House any longer. I am grateful for having been given this rare opportunity to have advanced so close to the Dispatch Box. I feel safer and more at home on the Back Benches and no doubt that is where I shall spend most of my life in this place. We do not intend to divide the House—I detect that we have not the necessary troops to do so—but we shall try to make several amendments in Committee.

8.49 pm

Mr. Luce: I am encouraged by the two-hour debate we have had on the arts. Against the background of the Bill we have had a broad-ranging debate. Over only the past week I made a statement to the House last Thursday, I answered questions for 10 minutes to a packed House on Monday and now we have had this debate. That demonstrates the enormous interest that there is in the arts in general and in our culture. If I may repeat what I said, it goes far beyond day-to-day politics. The subject is of

fundamental importance to our way of life, our culture, heritage and history. As a new Minister for the Arts I have found the debate fascinating.

I do not want to reopen old wounds from last night's debate, but I do not think that it would have done Parliament any harm if this discussion had been shown on television. It might have been of interest to Londoners who will be affected by the Bill. However, I had better not go further on that, or I shall be in trouble.

There have been interesting speeches, not all of which I agree with, but all the points made are well worth taking on board. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) made a fascinating and thoughtful speech. I noted carefully what he said; I shall try to comment on some of the points and I shall write to him about the others. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) talked with great passion about the sponsorship scheme which could affect the revenue of the Museum of London. My hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) spoke, too, with great feeling about the Bill and about conservation in general. I am grateful to him for what he said.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) referred to two key points on which I shall comment in a moment. I must put the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) straight. I do not want to start a fresh debate about the Greater London council, but let there be no shadow of doubt that our commitment to abolish the GLC and the metropolitan counties was clearly stated in our manifesto of 1983. It is there, and stares me in the face. I will not read it to the House, but I want to put it firmly on record that the commitment is there. I shall try to answer the questions posed by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), who takes a close interest in the arts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh and the hon. Member for Paisley, South were concerned about the composition of the board of governors and the structure that will govern the running of the Museum of London. I take the point that there is concern because we are eliminating the GLC element. I have been asked what the role of the successor authorities is to be. I have been saying consistently over the last few days that I look to the successor authorities to play a full and constructive part, in conjunction with central Government, in supporting and encouraging the arts.

I hope that what I say will be of help to the House. Against the background of the history of the Museum of London and its connection with the City, as well as its connection with a much wider area, it is obvious that we are dealing with a special institution. My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield said that its interests went much wider than Greater London. I agree with that view. Therefore, it was necessary to take decisive action about its longer-term prospects.

The arrangements proposed in the Bill, which will allow the City to play a prominent part because of its long historical connection and which will also allow central Government to play a prominent role, are right. It would be difficult in addition to institutionalise the 32 boroughs into the longer-term arrangements. However, in the longer term I hope that the boroughs which are interested in the services provided by the Museum of London will feel able to play their part in providing additional funding. There is no reason why they should not do that. I am not sure whether the hon. Member was suggesting that the 32 boroughs should be institutionalised into the longer-term arrangements.

I take seriously the views put forward about the composition of the board of governors. The point was made that it should reflect the interests not only of the City, which obviously the corporation will undertake with its nine nominees, but of greater London. The present board of governors is made up of a distinguished group of people. With the changes in composition, the breadth of experience and knowledge will cover a wider area than the City. The views of the community, which will no doubt be reflected in the successor authorities, should be taken carefully into account. The Prime Minister will have power to appoint nine of the 18 governors. I assure the House that the views put forward today will be considered seriously. I hope to overcome the anxieties that have been expressed.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I was not here for the whole debate, but I understand the Minister's personal views on these matters. Does he not realise that the arrangements which he is attempting to defend are an affront to those of us in the London borough of Newham, where, because of an initiative by the Museum of London, there is to be a dockland museum? Indeed, already in my constituency there is a collection relating to the hard work in the docklands to which the hon. Member for Eastleigh has referred. We will have an institutional mess because there has been no proper provision in the Museum of London for Londonwide participation. Because of the dissolution of the GLC, which is the responsibility of the Prime Minister, the position is ironic. Therefore, I endorse the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) about the inappropriateness of the City as a final and long-term repository for this responsibility.

Mr. Luce: I acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman's borough of Newham has a close interest in the Museum of London. I was seeking to say earlier that it would be difficult to institutionalise an arrangement in which all the 32 successor authorities of London were involved in the arrangement. A problem of great complexity could arise.

The hon. Member for Paisley, South was consistent in his view about admission charges, and it is right that I should respond to that point. The board of governors of the Museum of London will have a discretion, as other trustees and boards of governors have for museums elsewhere. He may disagree with it, but that is the factual position. In my view, the discretion should be with the local bodies, so that they may decide for themselves whether in their particular circumstances it would be worth trying an experiment, either by means of voluntary donations or by admission charges, in the manner of the National Maritime Museum, with a view to finding out whether, in addition to the basic funding that the Government will continue to give to the museum, they can raise extra revenue. I believe that it is right in those circumstances to allow the choice to be made by the trustees.

Mr. Buchan: We have reached a sharp engagement of values and of conscience on this question. Surely anything that reduces entry to a museum or gallery can be seen only as an enemy of education.

When museums and galleries begin to make charges, having been encouraged to do so, surely any Minister will begin to re-evaluate his grants to them.

[Mr. Buchan]

The important point to recognise is that the museums are not in the ownership of the Government. They are trustees for the public good, and the right to make charges should not be given to the governors.

Mr. Luce: I respect the view that the hon. Gentleman holds with great passion and consistency. As he rightly anticipated, we shall have to disagree.

There is no central direction from the Government that there should be admission charges in museums. The question must be for them to decide. If they determine, after a period, that admission charges are not leading to a general improvement in their services, or have resulted in a reduction in the number of visitors, it is for the board of governors and trustees to decide whether to continue with the experiment.

After only two and a half months in my present post, I am conscious that I cannot go round the country telling museums, galleries and other arts bodies that they must go flat out to raise extra revenue, and then punish them for so doing. They must not be penalised if they respond to the encouragement to raise extra revenue. That is precisely why I am looking at how we should treat the revenue and receipts of museums. It is fair to say that under the present system they are penalised when they seek to raise extra resources. The hon. Members for Paisley, South and for Newham, North-West and I disagree about whether museums and boards of governors and their trustees should have the freedom to determine what to do, and there is a legitimate point of difference between us. I take on board the point about encouraging rather than discouraging authorities when they wish to raise extra revenue.

Sir David Price: In the context of the Bill and the arrangements for the Museum of London, is the Minister prepared to tell us that the Corporation of the City of London will give the same guarantee as he will?

Mr. Luce: We shall have to discuss that with the City Corporation, but we are now anticipating something that may not happen. I do not know whether the Museum of London governors will decide that they wish to introduce voluntary or compulsory charges. That is a matter for them.

Mr. Tony Banks *rose*——

Mr. Luce: Let me complete my remarks so that we can understand each other.

We must give every encouragement to museums to help themselves but in such a way that they are not penalised for doing so. Therefore, we must maintain basic funding on the taxpayers' behalf. I make that commitment for the Museum of London and for other museums.

My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) mentioned sponsorship. We should not under-estimate the role that business sponsorship can play, especially when it is pooled with taxpayer and local authority funding and that of the media and television, which is substantial. I do not suggest that business sponsorship is a gigantic proportion of the total funding of the arts, but it is growing and it can play a part. My hon. Friend is right to say that business sponsorship can play a constructive part, because it has a multiplier effect. In the first year of operation, the new Government business sponsorship incentive scheme has operated successfully. It has raised £5,500,000—£4 million from business and £1·5 million from the taxpayer. That shows what the scheme can achieve. If the Museum of London, or other arts bodies, wish it, there is nothing to stop them from tapping business resources as a way of supplementing arts support. I am a great believer in the diversity of resources for the arts. It is not healthy to be dependent on one source.

Many points have been raised, but I do not wish to weary the House, so I shall reply by letter to some of the more specific points. However, the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) asked who decides the total budget for the Museum of London. The position for the Museum of London is similar to that for other museums. They prepare annual budget proposals, submit them to the Government and, in the London museum's case, to the City. The Government and the City jointly agree the total budget that we judge can be afforded and, as provided in the Bill, each pays half. The arrangements will feature in the annual budget that I shall announce in December.

Mr. Freud: The previous experience was that, whichever of the three parties was least able to afford an amount, that party's minimal amount was made up in equal parts by the other two. Will the Minister give an assurance that if, in not unprecedented generosity, the City of London were to find a substantial sum, the Government would match it? That is what 50 per cent. means.

Mr. Luce: Certainly we must, because a 50 : 50 arrangement is provided for in the Bill. However, there is an upper ceiling on my budget, so it would have to be the subject of discussion. Expenditure on the museum this year is about £4 million, which means that we all pay one third, or about £1,350,000 each. We shall have to make an arrangement to ensure continual adequate funding for the museum which, no doubt, will require lengthy discussions with the City.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh discussed borrowing powers for the museum. I can expand on this matter in a letter, but I must stress that none of the museums or galleries has powers to borrow money for capital developments. We are not only talking about the problems of the Museum of London. However, the Government will meet their share of annual capital expenditure on approved projects. As my hon. Friend knows, that is usually done through the Votes. I am considering the matter in the context of next year's budget.

Sir David Price: The fact that the others have not done so is no reason for not starting now. We must have an experiment; why not start with the Museum of London? Although this is not the occasion to do it, I would argue the case for introducing other sources of money, especially through the business sponsorship scheme. That makes the case stronger for equipping all such bodies with capital resources.

Mr. Luce: I note what my hon. Friend says. He has raised a wider issue, but one of considerable importance——

Sir David Price: My hon. Friend raised it originally.

Mr. Luce: I am responding to my hon. Friend's point.

In supporting the Bill, my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West mentioned the importance of the Council of Europe convention on the protection of architectural heritage. I am sure that he had in mind the Museum of London Bill when he mentioned it. The United Kingdom Government signed the convention at a conference in Spain. As my hon. Friend knows, the convention deals with the recording, preservation, conservation and presentation of our heritage. The United Kingdom already does that which the convention requires, and I hope that other nations will follow our lead.

Although I have not answered all the points raised in this important debate, I hope that hon. Members will accept my written replies. I hope that the House is now confident enough to give the Bill a Second Reading. The board of governors of the Museum of London met today and confirmed its full support for the Bill, including the provisions on archaeology. That is a good basis upon which to move forward. With that in mind, I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of Seven Members, Four to be nominated by the House and Three by the Committee of Selection.

Ordered,

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office not later than 28th November 1985, and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the said Committee,

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents.

Ordered,

That if no such Petition as is mentioned in sub-paragraph *(a)* above is presented, or if all such Petitions are withdrawn before the meeting of the Committee, the order for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee shall be discharged and the Bill shall be committed to a Standing Committee.

Ordered,

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition.

Ordered,

That the Committee have power to report from day to day the Minutes of Evidence taken before it.

Ordered,

That Three be the Quorum of the Committee. — *[Mr. Neubert.]*

Museum of London Bill [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Museum of London Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

9.12 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): It is rare for me to speak on a money resolution, although I was under the governance of Willie Ross for a long period. This narrow money resolution deals only with clause 4, because the major proposals on money under clause 3 are budgeted for in the £17 million available.

Under clause 4, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England may make grants to the board of governors for the purpose of assisting the board's archaeological services. The major functions of the museum under clause 3 are already catered for, but the change from a one third share to a half share represents a substantial amount of money. About £700,000 will have to come from the £17 million that has been earmarked for museums and galleries under this and other Bills. Clause 4 must also be covered by that £17 million. Is there any limit to the amount that can come out of that? The Government are determined that £17 million will be sufficient to cope with the problems of all museums and galleries in the United Kingdom after the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils.

The money earmarked for the performing arts was £16 million and it was grossly insufficient to the tune of something like £30 million. There was, therefore, a massive shortfall and the new Minister had to deal with it last week. He was unable to persuade the Treasury to give the full amount. That figure for the performing arts is the parallel figure to the £17 million endorsed as sufficient for galleries and museums. Already in the first Bill following the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan councils, we see that not only does it infringe on the democratic principle but that it also begins to erode the amount of money put to one side.

We must know if there will be sufficient cash to deal with problems arising for museums and galleries in all the metropolitan areas in England and Wales and in London itself, in which other problems may arise. Can the Minister guarantee that there will be no cuts, that sufficient money will come forward and that if the £17 million is insufficient it will be increased? Above all, can he guarantee that there will be no hold-up on the precise archaeological services which his hon. Friend argued for so ably? He said that it was one of the essential parts of the Bill and was almost extending the concept of archaeological services into the field of oral history, as witnessed by recent industrial archaeology at Covent Garden.

Given the record of this Government, the Minister must accept that they are rapidly creating a kind of industrial archaeology as more and more industries and factories which were living parts of the history of London are demolished as a result of the monetarist policies of the Government. If I were not dealing with the narrow remit of this clause I would be prepared to expand on that. The problem facing the Minister is that he has inherited a remit

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containing the kind of values that run totally counter to the monetarist theories of this Government from the Prime Minister down.

Even in a money resolution the Government have substituted price, money, cash. Their souls chafe at the thought of turning art to cash, as Paul Jennings once said. As my hon. Friend rightly said when speaking in his capacity as chairman of the GLC, in consequence they value nothing. Will we get a guarantee and will more money be coming forward? Will the high hopes we all have for a proper Museum of London and the archaeological service connected with it be properly taken care of by the Government?

9.17 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): From the way in which the hon. Gentleman speaks about the Government's record in the arts, it seems that he has not quite taken on board the fact that in the last six years the Government have more than doubled the amount of money for the arts. In real terms we have increased the money. One of the great national bodies in the arts is the Arts Council and we have increased its money in real terms by 7 per cent. in the past six years. I am very proud of the Government's record on the arts.

Mr. Buchan: I am delighted to hear from the Civil Service that in the past six years spending has increased in real terms by 7 per cent. We were told by the Minister's predecessor, the Minister who stood in for his predecessor, and the Department that it has been increased by 18 per cent. in the past six years. I am glad they have listened to some of the figures I gave them. When we look at the things that had to come out of the increase we find that it is down to about 1·3 per cent.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman is confusing the Arts Council with the general budget for the arts. In real terms the total budget for the Arts Council over the past six years has increased by 7 per cent. and there has been an increase in the total budget for the arts. We are talking about a money resolution and that information is by way of background. As I said in my opening remarks, we have made available an additional £17 million to deal with the abolition problems of museums. In his remarks the hon. Gentleman talked about extra funding. That will come from the £17 million. We shall continue under the ordinary budget for the provision of the basic funding.

In considering clause 4, we must remember that the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible for the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission; I have not dealt with that aspect in the debate and the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) will appreciate the point I am making. It is in the context of the additional requirements for the archaeological services of London that we are discussing this resolution.

It has been clear for some time that that commission's annual grant would reflect the additional responsibilities for grant-aiding the Greater London archaeology service. The Secretary of State for the Environment is in that way making additional sums available for the purpose. I hope that, with that explanation, the hon. Gentleman will be satisfied with the position.

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Museum of London Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I will put together the Questions on the motions relating to the Statutory Instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

Income Tax

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Ivory Coast) Order 1985 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 21st October, in the last Session of Parliament.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Canada) Order 1985 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 21st October, in the last Session of Parliament.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Finland) Order 1985 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 21st October, in the last Session of Parliament.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Soviet Union) Order 1985 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 21st October, in the last Session of Parliament.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Norway) Order 1985 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 21st October, in the last Session of Parliament.

Customs and Excise

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) Order 1985 (S.I. 1985, No. 1630), dated 29th October 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 29th October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

Ordnance Survey (Trading Practices)

9.21 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am grateful for the opportunity offered by this debate, in which I shall be discussing the livelihood, careers and job security of between 600 and 700 people who have their homes and work in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Cheltenham, Sevenoaks and London. They all work for companies whose names will be familiar to hon. Members from days long ago in the classroom, from evenings by the fire, from motoring journeys and from wet nights canvassing on unfamiliar city streets.

Those companies are John Bartholomew in Edinburgh, William Collins in Glasgow, Geographers' A–Z in Sevenoaks, Geographia in Cheltenham and George Phillip in London. They are all small, private sector companies in competition with each other. They draw—this is an important point in what I shall say—and publish their own atlases, maps and street plans. They recruit and train young map-makers. It is a skilled and interesting job offering a good career and worthwhile prospects in the private sector.

Those companies have jointly formed the Map Publishers' Fair Trading Committee to represent their legitimate worries and concerns to Government and Parliament. For more than two years that committee has made representations to the Government about the present trading activities of the Ordnance Survey.

At least 37 Conservative Members are concerned about the issue. Representations have been made to the Secretary of State for the Environment and his Ministers, to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and to the Prime Minister. The matter was raised in debate at the Scottish Conservative party conference and was the subject of motions at the Conservative party conference at Blackpool this year. Most of those 37 Members of Parliament have reflected the bewilderment and anxiety of their constituents who work or are otherwise involved in the private sector companies I have mentioned.

The confusion arises because the Ordnance Survey, which is a Civil Service Department controlled by the Secretary of State for the Environment, has entered the commercial sector of road atlas publishing. The map publishers contend—I fully support them and speak on their behalf—that the activities of the Ordnance Survey represent unfair competition. The Government argue otherwise, and in each and every case Ministers have repeated the original arguments that were presumably drafted by the Ordnance Survey and puffed up by officials and Ministers on their way to a formal letter of response.

I shall later state why I think such competition is unfair, but I shall now argue the points of principle. The Ordnance Survey, as a Government-owned trading activity, is required to be as commercial as possible. The Government have already decided that the Ordnance Survey cannot be privatised—so far, well and good. However, both this Government and their predecessor, elected in 1979, have given the highest possible priority to free enterprise and the growth of the private sector. In the atlas and street plan market, fully competitive trading has provided a rich variety of material to the consumer. In 1979, 1983 and even more so today, Government policy is to stimulate and

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encourage small business, to privatise Government-owned business wherever possible, and to ensure the greatest possible efficiency and value for money for the taxpayer.

As for activities that must necessarily remain Government controlled — against the Government's clearly stated principles of free enterprise—why are the Government not only allowing but encouraging the Ordnance Survey to move in and use its massive resources, funded by the taxpayer, to seize the lion's share of a market hitherto well served by the private sector? The danger of the Ordnance Survey doing that is not imaginary. It is likely to lead to nationalisation by the back door, through a monopoly of map making in the hands of a Government Department, while a hitherto healthy private sector takes a caning and risks eventually going right down the pan. How can that be sensible Government policy? Is it just a staggering example of the right hand not realising what the left is doing?

There is some doubt about the fairness of the competition provided by the Ordnance Survey publications. The Government have said that it is fair, but the map publishers argue that it is not. I hope that the Minister will deal with these points and the question of unfair trading. No one denies that the Ordnance Survey is taking business away from the private sector. The Department of the Environment justifies that by arguing that the Ordnance Survey commercial business is expanding the market. The Ordnance Survey uses the same justification for the expensive advertising campaign that it has recently commissioned.

How does the Minister reconcile this with the Ordnance Survey's annual report for 1984-85, which clearly shows a 4·9 per cent. reduction in the volume of Ordnance Survey small-scale maps sold during the past three years and a reduction of 8·9 per cent. in the volume of large-scale maps sold during the same period? How can the charge of unfair trading by the Ordnance Survey be denied when in respect of the Ordnance Survey atlas of Great Britain the cost of compiling and drawing the maps used in that atlas — estimated at £500,000 — was not taken into account?

The maps used in that atlas — the first Ordnance Survey joint venture—are a publicly owned asset worth at least £500,000. Therefore, why was a private company —in this case Country Life Books, which was the co-publisher—allowed to profit from the use of this asset without being charged an appropriate fee, especially as the independent map publishers would have to pay an appropriate fee?

Ordnance Survey advertising costs are extremely high compared with those of the private sector map maker and publisher, and some of its advertisements relate both to the commercial and non-commercial products of the Ordnance Survey. Will the Minister give an assurance that there has been no cross-subsidy?

The Ordnance Survey spends most of its money on large-scale surveys, and that is inevitably the area of greatest loss. Last year's expenditure was £33·6 million, with a revenue of only £11·4 million. Rather than trying to reduce the deficit of £22·2 million by commercial undertakings that are causing so much difficulty and are blatantly unfair to the private sector operator, why not follow the principle of leaving costs where they lie and recover the deficit from those who benefit from large-scale mapping? This could be done by placing an appropriate charge on the use of this mapping for, say, the sale and purchase of land, buildings and houses, and a small charge, possibly relevant to agents' fees, could eliminate that deficit altogether.

Why is the Ordnance Survey, which is now a competitor in atlas and town plan publications, still allowed to dictate the rules and costs for the use of national survey data by its very own competitors, all of which operates to the single advantage of the Ordnance Survey? In the case of the Ordnance Survey motoring atlas, co-published with Temple Press, why was the facsimile royalty charge not included in the product pricing?

The first Ordnance Survey co-publication arranged with the Hamlyn group was done without any invitation to bid being offered to any other publisher, yet a condition of Ordnance Survey co-publication is that only Ordnance Survey mapping material is used and that the copyright remains vested with the Ordnance Survey. Private sector map makers and publishers, such as Geographers' A-Z and Bartholomew, are thus prevented from entering such agreements as it would mean discarding their own mapping material. Does my hon. Friend agree that this is discrimination against the private sector map maker, who has invested a great deal of capital in the cartography of the country?

I come back to my earlier point of principle. The risk that we run is of gradually losing the activities of the private sector map maker and moving to a monopoly where map making is carried out only by the Ordnance Survey; and although it may co-publish with publishers, none of those 600 or 700 map makers will be working in the private sector. That cannot be right in terms of the Government's political principles.

It has been argued that the review by Peat Marwick Mitchell and Company has been used as evidence of fair trading by the Ordnance Survey. In their report, the accountants said that this was not the purpose of their investigation. In paragraph 2.11 they said:

"Our brief did not ask us to comment substantively on the equity of the Ordnance Survey's commercial operations, but rather to recommend a form of presentation in the trading accounts which would allow the reader to draw his or her own conclusions as to equity."

Paragraph 2.4 says:

"we have not conducted an audit of its accounts and not attempted to check either compliance with systems explained to us or the accuracy of the accounting statements so far produced."

Will my hon. Friend confirm that the accountants did not investigate any specific Ordnance Survey commercial production, such as the Ordnance Survey atlas, to prove or disprove the specific charge of unfair trading on specific products?

An undertaking was given that Peat Marwick Mitchell and Company would conduct an independent review and that it would investigate the charges that the Ordnance Survey was trading unfairly. I attended a meeting with a previous Minister when that assurance was given. Why, then, were the accountants given their terms of reference by the very organisation that they were required to investigate? We know that their findings went first to the Ordnance Survey before being presented to the Minister. Naturally, the group that I represent cannot feel confident that that survey was completely impartial.

Will my hon. Friend guarantee that the presentation of Ordnance Survey trading accounts will, in accordance with the terms of reference given to the investigation, be

in sufficient detail for the reader to be able to judge whether trading has been fair for any particular Ordnance Survey commercial publication? We are competing with new products in the shop and on the street.

I move on to the general efficiency of the Ordnance Survey as an organisation. The Department of the Environment has said that detailed reviews of the map-production facilities——

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): I do not think that my hon. Friend means to imply that Peat Marwick Mitchell and Company was not impartial, although I agree with his point. Is not my hon. Friend saying that the terms of reference that the company was given were not sufficiently all embracing for it to answer the questions that we should have liked it to answer?

Mr. Wolfson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. I am casting no aspersions upon the professional ability of Peat Marwick Mitchell. As I am sure my hon. Friend will agree, if one wants consultants or accountants to answer a question it is crucial to detail the exact question that they must cover. In this case that was not done to the satisfaction of those who are worried about unfair trading practices.

As I said, the Department of the Environment has told us that detailed reviews of the map production facilities at Ordnance Survey headquarters have established that the current operating arrangements are the most economic method of working. Who has undertaken those reviews? Can the people involved be asked to explain how it is more economic to confine the expensive equipment and air-conditioned accommodation that exists there to single-shift working? In our view, the kind of capital tied up in the Ordnance Service operation, if held in the private sector, could not be sustained by single-shift working. Machinery and equipment would have to be used far more extensively.

I find it surprising that the Government do not pursue that point directly and specifically. Do we not argue in every other case that when free enterprise is involved it is its need for continuous profitability that forces management to make the best use of its capital equipment? I suggest that the pressures are not there in this case.

I also bring to my hon. Friend the Minister's attention the fact that a Rayner inquiry was carried out into the former directorate of overseas surveys, the sister organisation to the Ordnance Survey abroad. That has now been dramatically reduced in size and incorporated into the Ordnance Survey. That survey by Rayner found that the directorate of overseas surveys was less efficient than the private sector. The standards of operation and staffing at the directorate were at the time of the inquiry comparable to those of the Ordnance Survey. The private sector, not unnaturally, believed itself to be more efficient than the Ordnance Survey. As there has been no similar inquiry into Ordnance Survey efficiency, does my hon. Friend agree that such an inquiry should be initiated as soon as possible?

I am grateful for having had rather longer than one normally gets to develop my point in this Adjournment debate. I said that a considerable number of Conservative Members are, not unnaturally, worried about this matter. I can perhaps summarise that anxiety in the words of one of my hon. Friends who wrote in support of the points that I have been airing tonight. He said:

"In the light of my strongly held views that small business should be encouraged and not subject to what is unfair competition, I certainly support the thrust of the argument put forward by members of the Map Publishers Fair Trading Committee.

That is merely one quotation from similar points made by a great many of my hon. Friends who are also bewildered, uneasy and angry at what appears to be a contradiction in terms of Government policy and action."

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) has initiated the debate. I am pleased also to acknowledge that he has included a number of colleagues in much of what he has said. He knows that I share his concern that a Government Department should not be allowed to enter the market and to take work away from successful private sector businesses by any means of unfair competition. I acknowledge the task that he has undertaken on behalf of private map makers throughout the country in his remarks. I shall do my best to set out in context the position of the Ordnance Survey in relation to private sector operators.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks knows that in 1981 my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), when Secretary of State for the Environment, set out clearly the Government's policy towards Ordnance Survey activities. In particular, this policy required the Ordnance Survey to reduce its call on public funds while remaining efficient. The main method by which this was to be achieved was by raising the financial recovery targets for its large-scale activities, by maximising the recovery on small scales and by encouraging greater co-operation with private sector publishers. Within the management of the organisation, it had to operate within the constraints of financial and manpower limits and to recover the cost of commercial products from its customers together with a return on the capital employed.

It has been suggested that the Ordnance Survey should meet its financial targets solely by improving sales of its existing products. It has, of course, attempted to do this, but without success. It therefore finds itself competing in the area of the market which private map publishers find commercially attractive. It is worth mentioning that practically all private sector publishers which produce atlases and maps of Great Britain use Ordnance Survey material as their base.

Without the co-operation of the Ordnance Survey in making this mapping available, many of these publishers could not have created their mapping businesses and could not continue in business. It is, of course, the Ordnance Survey which carries the large costs of keeping the mapping up to date, and it continues to do so within the much more stringent guidelines introduced in 1981, which, as my hon. Friend says, are continously under review. Despite this, on entering the market previously dominated by the private sector, the Ordnance Survey has not sought to withdraw permission for the private sector to use Ordnance Survey material, which obviously it could have done. It has entered the market on equal terms by charging itself royalties for the use of its own material and by using full commercial guidelines and overheads.

My hon. Friend referred to advertising. I know that there have been criticisms about the way in which the Ordnance Survey has used advertising. It has been

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criticised by consultants for spending too little in the past on advertising campaigns. The current campaign is being funded by small-scale map revenue. Even so, there has been some criticism of the Ordnance Survey's commercial activities by a minority of publishers, and it was to eliminate any possible worry about unfair competition from the Ordnance Survey that my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government announced the publication of "Guidelines for Ordnance Survey Commercial Activities" in July 1984. These guidelines direct that the Ordnance Survey undertakes its commercial activities on a fair basis and it is a cardinal requirement that there should be no unfair cross-subsidy of this commercial work from the basic scales to which the taxpayer contributes. My hon. Friend will know that the Ordnance Survey commercial trading practices were queried when the map publishers fair trading committee put a case to the Office of Fair Trading, but will also know that the OFT eventually concluded that the complaints were not justified.

The Ordnance Survey is meticulous in ensuring that its commercial trading practices are not just fair, but seen to be fair. It is a matter of routine that, when establishing a selling price, all costs contributing to co-publications are considered. The use of marginal costing is not employed. Not only are the Ordnance Survey direct material and overhead costs considered; so, too, are the co-publisher's costs which normally include editorial, printing, design and storage costs in addition to salaries and overheads. The accounting methods used by the Ordnance Survey are as nearly as possible in line with those used by any commercial undertaking.

A royalty rate in line with that charged to private sector publishers for an equivalent product is similarly included in the costs. The value of the Ordnance Survey name is taken into account and selling and distribution costs are included. Finally, a realistic profit margin is added before the selling price is determined. Unless the profit is attractive to both the co-publisher and the Ordnance Survey, such a project will not proceed. Later this year, the Ordnance Survey will publish its 1984-85 trading accounts. This will be the first time—I hope that this answers my hon. Friend's point—such detailed accounts have been published. I am sure that they will be of interest to all other map makers for comparison.

To establish its co-publications, the Ordnance Survey invites publishers to come to open days at its Southampton headquarters so that ideas can be exchanged. These open days have so far attracted about 80 publishers, some of which are established map publishers and some of which are not. No publishers have been excluded from the open days, or from consideration as potential co-publishing partners. Ideas for such co-publications are generally put forward by private sector firms. It is very rare for the Ordnance Survey to initiate a co-publication.

After discussions with a potential co-publisher, a joint decision is taken as to whether the project will proceed. An important consideration at this stage is whether the project uses the archive sensibly. After initial approval, there are a number of stages during which the project is reviewed and a decision to proceed or cancel is taken, but the overriding principle in these reviews is financial viability.

The Government believe that one of the benefits of competition is to improve the standard of products, and since the Ordnance Survey expanded its commercial activities, the quality of maps, atlases and guidebooks has improved. Those new products have increased public awareness of maps and generally given a better understanding of maps. It is hoped that that will stimulate a greater demand, which will be to the advantage of private sector map publishers and the Ordnance Survey.

I have noted the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks has made so eloquently, and must assure him that the Government share his interest in the continuing viability of small businesses. That is why the Ordnance Survey is required to follow very correct trading practices so that there is no danger of successful private sector map makers being disadvantaged by unfair competition from a Government Department.

I have already mentioned that the Ordnance Survey will be publishing its trading account for the first time later this year. In 1984, the Government asked the eminent firm of city consultants Peat Marwick Mitchell to advise on the format and design of those accounts. My hon. Friend spoke at length about its report. At the start of the review, Peat Marwick and Ordnance Survey agreed that the study would not simply advise on the trading accounts, but would "examine underlying costing methods" in order to be confident that costs are attributed to different products fairly, particularly to the co-publications that are not Exchequer-supported.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, announced the publication of the Peat Marwick review in April 1985. It concluded:

"subject to the points made in the report we are generally satisfied that accounting methods used by Ordnance Survey to allocate costs between products are soundly based and cover all major costs"

and particularly

"the use in internal product costings of a notional royalty rate equivalent to that charged to third party publishers is fair; an argument can be advanced that the particular rates used in internal product costings are sometimes too high".

All the independent evidence therefore shows that Ordnance Survey is acting fairly. Most map publishers base their products on Ordnance Survey material and accept competition with each other. I am bound to ask: why should Ordnance Survey be the only publisher not allowed to use Ordnance Survey mapping in the profitable areas of the market? One can hardly expect Ordnance Survey to continue carrying out the expensive survey, providing the unprofitable mapping, producing the base-mapping as a source for its own competitors, while allowing them to keep the more lucrative areas.

Fears are also expressed that Ordnance Survey competition may undermine employment in private sector map publishing. My hon. Friend opened the debate by referring to employment. However, I think that it is true to say that Ordnance Survey co-publications have created considerable work in private sector printing, publishing and distribution sectors. In fact, all the co-publications have been printed by private firms, and some hon. Members will doubtless find many employers in their constituencies who support the new Ordnance Survey activities.

Mr. Wolfson: While I accept that there may be increased work through the co-publications, does not my

hon. Friend agree that that work does not use map makers? It is only publishing work. I was being very specific about the career opportunities for those involved in map making in the group that I was speaking of.

Mrs. Rumbold: I accept the point that my hon. Friend makes about employment, but I reiterate that the group of people to which he referred has several opportunities for its expertise in map making as well as increased opportunities for employment arising out of increased publication of Ordnance Survey and private sector map making.

With regard to continuing Government policy towards Ordnance Survey, I can do no better than quote from a recent letter by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in which she stated:

"It is an essential part of the Government's policy that where there are Government-owned trading activities which cannot be privatised (and we have looked at Ordnance Survey and decided that it cannot be) then they should be run so far as possible on a commercial basis. That means that the cost of the services should fall to the fullest possible extent on the customers of those services, and not on the taxpayer. We therefore require Ordnance Survey to expand the market for their commercial products on the basis of fair competition without cross-subsidy or any Government guarantee".

Finally, Ordnance Survey has long been held in high regard and I am sure that under present policies it will continue to be, and that the Government, the private sector and the public will all continue to benefit from its activities.

Rape

9.58 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): In a House where women are so greatly under-represented, we have a special responsibility to concern ourselves with the growing scourges of modern-day society. I am grateful for this opportunity of raising the question of the growth in the incidence of rape, and, particularly, in the divergence of sentencing policy that we appear to be seeing in the judiciary at present.

Rape is one of the nastier and, certainly, more violent crimes. We should speak of it as precisely that — a vicious sexual assault on another person who neither invites nor desires such an attack. Today detective chief superintendent Thelma Wagstaff of the Metropolitan police is quoted in the newspapers as saying that the crime of rape——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Mrs. Dunwoody: Thelma Wagstaff said that the crime of rape has increased by about 6 per cent. this year, and that it is getting nastier. Five years ago a victim would have told the police "He raped me." Now the offender is also committing buggery, forcing the victim to have oral sex and urinating over her. The growth is in one of the most appalling crimes, and the House must consider it with great urgency.

Sexual violence against women is a continuing problem. Recent publicity has highlighted the horrifying growths of gang rapes, rapes of small children, and some of the most appalling degradations of human beings. However, rape has existed for as long as there have been human beings. I trust that we shall not only remember it in the House when there is a great deal of unpleasant publicity about it. If we are to deal with some of those difficulties, we must consider the matter in wider terms than we have done so far.

We must consider how police procedures operate when a rape is reported to them. The Metropolitan police also reported that when women police constables were appointed specifically to deal with this violent crime, there was a 60 per cent. increase in the reporting of rapes. That is an astonishing figure, and it shows that this underlying frightening crime has always existed in the community. I am sorry to say that the feeling continues that in some way the woman contributes to the circumstances, although not in those who understand the enormous degradation and fear that the victim suffers, by wearing particular clothes, by her inability to get herself home safely, or by the fact that young people are on the streets after a certain hour of night. In those cases it is suggested that they are contributing to the violent crime that is perpetrated against them.

It is important to stop talking about victims of crime in that sense. Frequently when a woman must go through the traumatic experience of reporting what has happened to her, she desperately needs to be handled by people who are carefully trained and understand the extent of the problem.

I am increasingly worried that we do not have sufficient special centres available. I welcome the fact that the police

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

have now thought about the need to create special legal and medical centres, where rape victims can be given assistance by those most skilled. However, we are still not dealing with many of the problems as we should.

Because of the rise in the number of rape cases, I asked to see some of the statistics on sentencing, and was horrified to see what seemed to be a drop in the severity of sentences being handed out, and that they do not seem to comply with the judges' orders. We must have consistency in sentencing, and the sentences must reflect the anger and outrage of society as a whole. We cannot tolerate the suggestion that, although rape is a serious crime, custodial sentences are not apposite and that it is probably better to move away from long sentences.

The reported remarks in a court case of a recent gang rape were clearly framed in terms that reflected the anger of society, but the sentences that were applied, although not out of line with the existing sentencing policy of many judges, did not seem to reflect the anger adequately.

I find it quite impossible to understand why the murder of a child or the most savage and violent rape of a woman should not be reflected in a sentence that at least ensures that those who perpetrate these appalling crimes are not allowed to escape the true consequences of their actions.

The Government have another responsibility. I want them to consider urgently whether they can provide funding for a series of rape crisis centres. There are several of these autonomous centres which give support and legal and medical counselling to people who have been subjected to rape. They are funded by a Department of Health and Social Security grant of £22,000 for three years —a minute amount of money when one considers the highly skilled and difficult task that people in those centres accomplish. It is important that they should not depend, as they do now, largely on voluntary donations.

Will the Minister consider talking to his opposite numbers with responsibility for health and for education as a matter of urgency and try to establish a series of rape crisis centres across the country with proper funding? That would enable them to begin to deal with this unholy tide of savagery. The centres provide after-care for many of those who will have to go through the trauma of a court case after their appalling experience.

Many women who succeed in coming to terms with what has happened to them, but who nevertheless go through a period of shock, need support to get through a court case. They need independent counselling and it is important that they should have access to women lawyers and women doctors. There are few women police surgeons. That is a disadvantage because this is the one crime in regard to which even the most levelheaded women flinch from a male doctor.

The London Rape crisis centre sees about 1,300 women for the first time in a year. It has about 3,000 cases, but many of them are second and third visits. The centre tells me that it is its very independence and autonomy that those with whom it deals most value. Women who have been raped are vulnerable to official procedures that carry them along with scent regard for the sensitivity of the situation. It is those who have to deal with rape victims who must consider how best to deal with the matter. It is clear that, until now, we have not succeeded in that regard.

Will the Minister consider sentencing policy, and now? Why is there so much variation in sentences? Why is it impossible to reflect society's clear view that such barbaric behaviour is unnacceptable at any level? The rundown of public services and difficulties experienced in quite simple things such as public transport, the need to travel alone and the reduction in the number of guards on trains, all affect women's feelings when travelling on public transport. They are at risk. Therefore, the Government have a special responsibility to seek ways of protecting them. We are very few in the House although we are vocal for our number. Nevertheless, there are many outside who look to us for protection. They have not received it so far. I hope that the Minister will give me an undertaking tonight.

10.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): It is not empty piety on my part when I say to the hon. Lady the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) that I greatly enjoyed her speech. She spoke with eloquence. She has raised a topic of importance and significance and I am glad that she had the opportunity to do so. I say so rather against my own interests because I had anticipated an early evening. If every Adjournment debate was on as important a topic and was conducted as effectively as the hon. Lady has conducted this one, there would be fewer junior Ministers with a jaundiced look as the moment for an Adjournment debate came near.

I endorse every word that the hon. Lady said about the nature of the crime of rape. It is always a serious matter. Very often it is a vicious offence and it is properly regarded as one of the most serious offences in the criminal calendar.

It is an appropriate starting point to emphasise that the view of Parliament for many years has been that the maximum penalty for rape should be life imprisonment. I shall say more about sentencing, but it is not the duty of Parliament to pass sentences. That is the duty of the courts and it is distinct from our role of making legislation and the Government's role as the executive. Parliament has left no one in doubt about the view that it takes. Life imprisonment is the maximum sentence available to the courts. Only offences that are regarded as the most grave carry that term of imprisonment. Rape is one of them. That is the clear message that the House has sent out for many years.

I am glad to have played some part in permitting another message to be sent out, with the assistance that the Government were able to give to the passage of the Sexual Offences Act 1985, put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes), another doughty lady campaigner in the House. One proposal in that Act that was perhaps overshadowed by the proposal on kerbcrawling was that the possible penalty for attempted rape should be raised from seven years to life imprisonment.

It was an anomaly that the offence of attempted rape —a serious matter for which the full intent to rape is required — should carry a penalty so low when the offence of rape itself carried life imprisonment. Now the two are equated. Therefore, the courts have all the powers they need to pass sentences that can truly reflect society's abhorrence of this crime.

The hon. Lady mentioned sentences. Of course, I am only too happy to take the opportunity to put on the record what we in the Home Office know about recent sentences for rape in the hope that it will be of interest. The figures

for 1984 show that a total of 325 defendants were sentenced by the Crown courts for rape. Of those, 212 went for immediate imprisonment as adults, 97 young offenders received young offender custodial sentences in youth custody detention centres and the like, two received hospital orders and 14 received non-custodial sentences.

When one comes to the length of the term of detention imposed in a youth custody detention centre or prison, one finds that of the 297 offenders sentenced to imprisonment, 81 were sentenced for up to two years, 190 for two years to five years, 20 for over five years, and six to life imprisonment. That suggests that the average sentence for rape is in the region of two to five years.

I stress again that it is not for me as a Minister to comment on the propriety of sentences, but I suspect that the hon. Lady would say an average of two to five years is inadequate. She nods her head in agreement. I imagine that a large number of people would agree with her. However, I repeat that it is a matter for the judiciary. It is for Government and Parliament to ensure that there is no let or hindrance to the judiciary in passing those sentences because the maximum penalties are set too low. Now that Parliament has increased the maximum sentence for attempted rape, no one can fairly suggest that Parliament has failed in its duty in asserting that the maximum available sentence is life imprisonment.

Mrs. Dunwoody: My concern is whether the guidelines of the Lord Chief Justice is being followed by the individual courts. I accept that there is no conceivable way in which Parliament could or should decide what sentences there should be in individual cases when we have not heard the evidence. If there are guidelines, it is important that they should not only be followed but be seen to be followed.

Will the Minister undertake to consider the definition of rape, which is very narrow and needs some redefining? It excludes many serious sexual assualts.

Mr. Mellor: On the second question, a range of charges are available. Although indecent assault is a lesser charge than rape, as a result of the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Drake the penalty for indecent assault has been increased from two to 10 years. Even if the act of rape, which has to be fairly rigorously defined, has not been committed, there are other offences, carrying substantial penalties, which can be charged in appropriate cases.

There are constitutional proprieties to be observed with regard to guidelines. That is a matter for the Court of Appeal and not for me. The leading case on the matter is the Crown against Roberts in 1982, in which the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Lane, emphasised his view of rape in terms with which I think the hon. Lady would agree. He said:

"Rape is always a serious crime. Other than in wholly exceptional circumstances, it calls for an immediate custodial sentence, first of all to mark the gravity of the offence, secondly to emphasise public disapproval, thirdly to serve as a warning to others, fourthly to punish the offender, and last, but by no means least, to protect women".

The significance of the Roberts judgment was that it listed various aggravating factors where it would be appropriate for the courts to take a particularly severe view in punishing an offender. It has to be borne in mind that, although rape is always a serious matter, rapes vary in gravity, particularly as regards the amount of violence applied.

In the Roberts judgment, the Lord Chief Justice listed the matters that would assist judges in determining whether a rape was a particularly serious one and thus merited a particularly severe penalty. The points listed were: whether a weapon had been used to frighten or to injure; whether the victim had sustained serious physical or mental injury; whether violence was used over and above that necessarily involved in the act itself; whether there were brutal threats; whether there were further sexual indignities or perversions other than the rape itself. The latter point is particularly relevant to the very telling and equally chilling phrases in the appropriate speech made by the Metropolitan police detective from which the hon. Lady quoted. Other points listed were: whether the victim was young or old; whether the offender was in a position of trust; whether the offender had intruded into the victim's home; whether the victim had been deprived of her liberty for a period; whether there were multiple rapes, or rapes by a group. That might be thought to be clear guidance to the courts as to the categories of rape that merit exceptionally heavy sentences.

However, the Lord Chief Justice has not yet set out further guidance as to the appropriate bandings in terms of sentences. The parallel might be the case of Aramah, relative to the sentencing of offenders for dealing in class A drugs, where clear bandings are given in terms of the years of imprisonment that might be appropriate for any given value of drug smuggled. The hon. Lady is asking whether there might be a case for the Court of Appeal to go a little further and convert the Aramah principles into the sentences applicable in rape cases. That is not a matter for me, but it is by no means an unhelpful suggestion, and I undertake to send a copy of *Hansard* to the Lord Chief Justice. He must make of it what he will. It is clearly important that the courts should reflect the gravity of such offences, especially the serious manifestations shown by some of the examples given in the Roberts case.

The hon. Lady also asked about the underlying reality in recorded offences of rape. We all know that there is a dark figure of crime and that the number of crimes recorded in no sense represents the number of crimes committed. We must also be clear that sexual crimes are among the most difficult crimes to report, because the victim feels humiliated, distressed and embarrassed, not only at having to recount what happened but at the fear that it might be put to her that she had led the individual on. By making the complaint, she might render herself liable to an ordeal lasting for months, involving her in giving evidence publicly about intimate matters.

In recent years, a conscious effort has been made to help the victims of rape to have more confidence in the authorities so that they will make complaints, and so that they can be confident that their complaints will be sensitively handled. One consequence of that is that the number of rapes recorded has increased significantly in recent years. I have the figures from 1974 to 1984. From 1974 to 1981, the figure fluctuated between 1,000 and 1,200. In 1984, it had increased to more than 1,400, and the figure for the first six months of this year shows a further significant increase. For the first six months of 1985, 780 rapes were recorded in England and Wales, compared with 613 for the same period in 1984 and 591 for the same period in 1983. During the first six months of 1985, the increase in the Metropolitan police district was 248. For the first six months of 1984, it was 152; and for the first six months of 1983, it was 138.

[Mr. Mellor]

We do not know whether there is an underlying upward trend, but we know that the Metropolitan police and other police forces have made a real effort to ensure that the reporting of rape is made easier, that the interviews are sensitively handled and that matters proceed in a way guaranteed to give the victim the greatest confidence in the system. As far as we know, until recently in some police areas, when a victim did not wish to proceed with a complaint, it was not registered as an offence. Now it is. That may have caused an increase in the figures, but it is a worthwhile consequence of the efforts to make the figures more material and to reflect genuinely the incidence of that crime in the community.

The Government played their part in this by issuing, in March 1983, guidance to chief officers on the conduct of rape investigations. I do not know whether the hon. Lady has seen that, but I shall send her a copy. It covers such matters as medical examinations, and the importance of sensitivity in questioning victims and of ensuring the victim's comfort and anonymity. The circular emphasises the need for medical examinations to take place in an environment where stress is reduced and where there is an atmosphere of care and concern.

The Metropolitan police have a special working party on rape and it is looking into the matter of recruiting more female police surgeons, as the hon. Lady suggested. The police hope to open a number of victim examinations suites where rape victims can be medically examined and interviewed in discreet and reasonably congenial surroundings. The first of these will shortly be opened in Brentford.

The interviewing of rape victims should be carried out by an officer experienced in such cases who, as the hon. Lady says, will often be a woman police officer. The Metropolitan police have a special scheme for women police officers to train them in taking statements, and for detectives there is a course on the techniques of sexual investigations. That was introduced last December.

In general it is not necessary to ask a complainant about previous sexual experience with third parties, because under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976 there are strict limitations on discussion of this matter in court. The police can take an active interest in the welfare of victims by referring them to local medical, social or voluntary services. The Metropolitan police have recently made arrangements with a number of London hospitals with specialist facilities for the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, to provide priority appointments for the victims of serious sexual assaults. If the victim does not want a priority appointment, she will be given the addresses and telephone numbers of the hospitals and all the details.

These are steps in the right direction, but the other important matter is that the police should fully investigate rape, treating it as the serious offence it is. It is reassuring to know that last year some 68 per cent. of reported rapes —that is, some 975 cases—were cleared up. Obviously, one wants the figure to approach 100 per cent. and no one is complacent about 68 per cent., but the fact that two thirds of rapes are cleared up is a fact upon which we must congratulate the police and it will spur them on to further efforts.

There is one other matter which the hon. Lady did not mention; the necessary changes in the 1976 Act about the anonymity of the victim and also the restriction, save with the permission of the judge, on the way in which the victim might be cross-examined about previous sexual experience. The Act also had in it a provision that the defendant should also enjoy the privilege of anonymity. The Criminal Law Revision Committee report on sexual offences, published last year, endorsed the views of the Heilbron committee which had earlier considered this matter. It was entirely in favour of anonymity for complainants but was against it for defendants.

The Criminal Law Revision Committee rejected as invalid the argument that the man should be granted anonymity just because the victim has it. The anonymity rule seems to suggest that in some way the interests of the victim and the defendant can be equated in a way which is not helpful. The Criminal Law Revision Committee also drew attention to the difficulty which arises where a man is charged with rape and other offences. If he is acquitted of rape but sent to prison for other offences it may be that a newspaper would be acting unlawfully if it named him. That is an extraordinary situation. Similarly, if a dangerous criminal charged with rape escapes before conviction, publicity cannot be used to trace him. In time, perhaps, the House will have an opportunity to reconsider that point.

This has been an important debate. There are areas which can be dealt with only by the courts and we must leave it to their judgment. Parliament must set out the framework of the sentences that are appropriate for rape, and we have done that. Parliament and the Government must intervene in other ways, and I hope I have set out what the Home Office has tried to do. I have taken the hon. Lady's point about the Department of Health and I shall certainly relay her opinions to the Department. This has been a valuable opportunity for me to reiterate what she has done. There are few graver and more appalling offences in the criminal calendar than rape and everything the Government are doing is designed to reinforce that strong and firm message.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 22 November 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

UNESCO

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

9.35 am

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): It is exactly a year to the day since my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary informed the House of the decision of the Government to submit formal notice of withdrawal from UNESCO. This will take effect, unless rescinded, on 31 December 1985. This decision followed a careful review of the background, and in particular of what had already been achieved in respect of reform of UNESCO during 1984.

UNESCO has been beset with problems of inefficiency, over-politicisation and obscure programming for a great many years. We have in particular been worried by a slow-moving, over-centralised, top-heavy administration, with outdated procedures and poor delegation of authority. Morale in the organisation has been notoriously bad. UNESCO had also become increasingly used as a forum for the propagation of ideas repugnant to the people of this country. The so-called new world information and communication order, an idea which arose from the work of a UNESCO-sponsored commission chaired by Sean MacBride, posed a threat to the freedom of the press because it could be used to justify rigid Government controls in the name of producing a balanced flow of information.

UNESCO activities have too often been used as a medium for Communist rhetoric — largely, but not exclusively, over such issues as peace, disarmament and human rights. An example of this is the working document prepared for the world congress on youth held in Barcelona early this year. Material sometimes comes through the secretariat which is thoroughly biased.

UNESCO has also, we believe, spent too much money in Paris on too many meetings and too many studies, often of doubtful value. Let me give two examples from UNESCO's current programmes. We really find it hard to believe in the value of studies on

"the social and cultural dimensions of world problems"

or on

"the relationship between access and participation in the interest of the democratisation of communication"

—an apparently harmless phrase which can be used to justify activities which are far from democratic.

That is not, of course, to say that everything UNESCO does is harmful or of little value. The constitution remains in most respects as valid today as it was 40 years ago. There is certainly a foundation of practical activity on which to build. For natural sciences UNESCO has provided research and training services in mathematics, physics, chemistry and life sciences, and perhaps particularly in geology, hydrology and oceanography. In education, the major regional programmes for literacy and primary education in Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean are developing soundly. Handbooks for teachers and other teaching materials are produced in various scientific and technical subjects. In culture, UNESCO has a long-standing reputation in promoting the preservation of monuments and the development of museums.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Minister agree that that part of UNESCO's programme which he is now praising constitutes about 98 per cent. of its expenditure, and that the part that he criticised earlier constitutes about 2 per cent.?

Mr. Raison: No, I do not agree. There is a core of good, solid work, but there are other aspects which give great cause for concern, not only to the Government, but to many others outside Parliament. Overall we were not satisfied that UNESCO represented good value for money either for us or for other member states, particularly the developing countries, and, contrary to what has sometimes been suggested, the sums involved are not so small as to be ignored. If we were to stay in UNESCO, our financial contribution for 1986 would be just under $9 million, or £6·4 million at current rates of exchange. The question that we have to ask is whether this money could be put to better use if it were to be devoted to other activities in education, science and culture within our overall aid programme.

British and other delegations had raised these issues at many previous sessions of the general conference, but until the last two years no comprehensive attempt to set the organisation to rights had been made. Following a review of our policy during 1983, we decided that if the results of the general conference held in that year were seriously damaging to British interests in some way, withdrawal should be seriously considered. The outcome of that conference was somewhat better than expected. The Americans nevertheless put in their notice to withdraw at the end of 1983, to take effect at the end of 1984. We decided that we should stay in the organisation, at least for 1984, and fight for reform from within, but that we should seriously consider withdrawal again if significant progress had not been made by the end of the year.

On 2 April 1984 I wrote to the director-general, Mr. M'Bow, to tell him that we thought radical changes were necessary and to spell out in broad terms those areas of UNESCO's programmes and management in which we sought improvements. We did not believe that it was necessary to propose in immense detail the means by which improvements might be gained. However, I made specific proposals in my letter. These have, where appropiate, been amplified. Indeed, I can reasonably claim that the proposals contained in my letter have largely set the agenda for reform of UNESCO.

In the wake of my letter and the pressures arising from the threatened United States withdrawal, various steps were taken by the director-general and by the executive board towards reform. In particular, the board set up the temporary committee of 13 members, including the United Kingdom. This met during the summer of 1984 and produced a series of detailed proposals for reform which were endorsed by the full board in the autumn of 1984. At

[Mr. Raison]

the same time, the board adopted a decision setting out the guidelines for the preparation of the next programme and budget covering the calendar years 1986 and 1987.

We reviewed the situation carefully towards the end of 1984 and acknowledged that some progress had been made towards reform. However, we concluded that much remained to be done. Certainly, at that time, we could not be confident that adequate reform to justify continued British membership would be achieved by the end of 1985. We therefore submitted our notice of withdrawal. At the same time, we said that a further review of British policy would be held after the general conference in 1985. Meanwhile, we would continue to work for reform, in co-operation with other countries, as vigorously as in 1984.

The Government's overriding interest in 1985, as in 1984, has been to bring about reform in UNESCO. I assure the House that British representatives in Paris and elsewhere have indeed vigorously pursued our aims throughout this period. I shall describe what has happened, and, inevitably, some of the details are complicated.

At its spring session this year, the executive board endorsed a timetable for the implementation of reforms already agreed which had been recommended by the temporary committee. It also adopted a series of detailed recommendations on the draft programme and budget for 1986-87.

The draft programme contained a number of useful innovations, notably, for the first time, an element of priority rating. This was forced on the secretariat by the United States withdrawal and the consequent loss of 25 per cent. of the budget. It took the form of dividing all activities into categories of first and second priority, the second priority activities amounting to approximately 25 per cent. of the whole. They will not be implemented unless additional funds are made available. Though crude, the setting of priorities was a useful step forward. As part of its recommendations to the general conference, the board suggested a number of changes to the priority ratings, the main thrust of which was to preserve the scientific programmes to a greater extent than originally envisaged by the secretariat.

The main event of the year was the general conference, which took place in Sofia from 8 October to 9 November. The principal role of the conference is to approve the programme and budget for the next biennium, but it considers a large number of other issues. However, it does not have the main responsibility for determining management issues or reforms; these are mainly within the constitutional responsibility of the director-general or the board.

Following the spring session of the board, we had carefully reviewed progress. In the light of this, a statement of key United Kingdom objectives for the conference was drawn up and circulated widely in Paris and in other capitals through our diplomatic missions before the conference. We were looking for further improvements in politically contentious programmes, more effective and concentrated programmes, decisions on financial issues which respected the board's recommendations concerning zero real growth and the principle of no extra cost to members arising from the United States withdrawal and confirmation of the management reforms which had already been agreed.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Will my right hon. Friend comment on the reasons given by the comptroller general to the House of Representatives and say whether they influenced our decision? Will they be taken into consideration, as they were extremely critical?

Mr. Raison: The American General Audit conducted a review of UNESCO, as my hon. Friend points out, as a result of which many critical points were made. On the other hand, it is fair to say that it was critical, not of what one might call the probity of the organisation, but of many of its operations. Those reports were not discussed directly by the executive board in Paris, because the United States had left the organisation. We made sure, however, that the substance of them was discussed during the proceedings in the last year or so.

To pursue the objectives which I described, the British delegation submitted a number of formal draft resolutions to the conference. Among the more important of these was a text proposing changes to priority gradings amounting to some $3·7 million across almost all major programmes, and detailed proposals concerning major programmes III and XIII, which deal respectively with communication issues and peace, disarmament and human rights. These are the two major programmes that give rise to most political problems for us.

I attended the Sofia conference for a few days near the beginning to make the main British plenary speech and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs took part in the discussions in the commission on major programme XIII towards the end of the conference.

In my speech I outlined what we hoped to achieve at the conference. I went on to suggest, however, that practical reforms were not everything and that we were looking for a return to the spirit which inspired the founding conference in 1945. I concluded by saying:

"It is this concern for freedom and the rights of the individual, taken together with our own belief that UNESCO is nowhere near sufficiently focused on the practical development of education, science and culture, which lie at the heart of the serious and carefully-considered steps we have taken. They are why we insist on thoroughgoing and comprehensive reform. Without it, our intention to withdraw will be confirmed".

During the visits of my hon. Friend and myself, we met many other delegations, formally and informally. It was clear to both of us that some were doubtful about our intentions but even those who believed, wrongly, that an irrevocable decision to withdraw had already been taken seemed anxious to keep us in or, at least, not give us an easy pretext to withdraw. We were impressed by the efforts made to produce a common line with other Western delegations.

On the positive side, the conference confirmed the important recommendations concerning zero real growth and no extra costs arising from the United States withdrawal. It confirmed the recommendation of the board to delete an international future-oriented study as a separate element in the programme. That aspect had concerned us. We held the line on communications issues, in spite of strong eastern European pressure and a recent decision in New York which endangered the UNESCO consensus language which had evolved concerning a new world information and communication order. Secretariat pressure for a number of new international legal instruments was successfully withstood. These included one particularly dangerous idea — the international

regulation of the use of works which have passed out of copyright protection. In a low-key conference there was less overt politicisation than before. For the first time the resolutions adopted on middle east issues within the competence of UNESCO were acceptable to us and to our Community partners. For the first time too the conference turned against a number of highly politicised and irrelevant draft resolutions produced by the eastern Europeans.

There were, however, significant disappointments. We had hoped to obtain changes in the priority ratings of specific activities which would preserve to the greatest extent possible key elements of the programme concerned with education, science and culture at the expense of less useful activities. Some changes were made, but the overall effect was disappointing.

In particular, we were unable to peg major programme XIII—the one concerned with peace, disarmament and human rights — to anything near the average overall reduction of 25 per cent. This was due partly to procedural problems, but mainly to an unwillingness on the part of most delegates to reopen issues which they regarded as having been dealt with by the executive board. There also remained points of concern about independent evaluation, which has been a key element in our reform programme.

Overall, the outcome on major programme XIII was mixed. The resolution that was adopted did not go as far as we had hoped in limiting UNESCO's role in relation to disarmament issues, but we were successful in preventing UNESCO, in its proposed activities for 1986-87, from endangering the supremacy of individual human rights as defined in the three universally recognised instruments. It was made clear that the in some ways questionable concept of people's rights had a different status from human rights and required further clarification.

We regret that the general conference as a whole showed little interest in looking for new ways of working, particularly in the programme commissions. This contrasts with the positive attitude towards procedural reform shown by the board.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): What does the Minister mean by saying that the concept of people's rights is questionable? Surely basic concepts such as the right to self-determination have long been recognised in international law.

Mr. Raison: The questionable element in the concept of people's rights is the point at which they are held to override individual rights. As I have said, there are international conventions which give a supremacy to individual human rights which we have always regarded as being of very great importance. People's rights, if they are abused, can be a way of determining that the collective power of the Government should override the rights of individuals. That is the area which concerns us.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): This is an important question. Will the Minister accept that the individual rights of citizens should be given equal consideration in the government of the country in which they live? That is the fundamental principle on which the American constitution is formed. Due process of law became the basis on which every American, black and white, had the right to vote. Is the present Government's view that human rights are denied in every country where there is not an absolutely equal franchise in respect of the election of the Government? That is what people's rights are about.

Mr. Raison: We believe that in a democracy every citizen should have the right to participate in government. The equal right to participate is the target towards which democracy must and should move. The fear about the doctrine of people's rights is that it can be used in a way to allow the power of the state to override the rights of the individual. That is our concern, and I should be surprised if even the right hon. Gentleman did not share that view.

Mr. Benn: With great respect, the use of people's rights in this House to take away the rights of the citizens of London by the abolition of the Greater London council is a perfect example of the way in which the Government have used their national majority to destroy the rights of individuals in this country.

Mr. Raison: It is wholly extraneous political considerations that mar the work of UNESCO, in the way that the right hon. Gentleman has just illustrated.

I now turn to the important report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, which appeared shortly before the general conference and which we have studied with great care. This debate is a response to one of the recommendations of the report—that this House should have a chance to give its view before a final decision is taken.

The House will not expect me to give a yes or no answer to the Select Committee's view that, subject to certain provisos, we should not implement our notice of withdrawal. What would be the point of consulting the House if I were to give the answer now? However, I should like to say a few words about four of the main issues dealt with in the report. These are the tactics of submitting formal notice of withdrawal, the financial balance sheet, the concept of universality, and the international consequences of withdrawal.

As regards tactics, I was pleased to see that the report seemed on balance to find that the effect on reform of our giving notice was beneficial. I note the conclusion that "it seems inconceivable that a reform programme of the kind now under way within UNESCO could have been undertaken without the stimulus provided by the United Kingdom Government".

What of the financial balance sheet? The report suggests that the figures provided by my officials suggest that the United Kingdom receipts from UNESCO's budget are substantially in excess of our direct budgetary contribution, but there are two important factors to bear in mind. First, the receipt figures include a very substantial element funded from sources other than the regular UNESCO programme, and to many of which — for example, the United Nations development programme— Britain makes a separate voluntary contribution. There is no certainty that there would be any loss of contracts for activities funded in this way. Indeed, it is possible that not all contracts under the regular programme would be lost. Furthermore, the purchase of goods and services in the United Kingdom for 1984 was $5·2 million and for 1985 $2·8 million. Of the remaining $10 million per annum referred to in the report, which represents payment of salaries to British employees of UNESCO in Paris or in the field, only a little would accrue to the United Kingdom balance of payments. So there are modifications which have to be made to the argument put forward in that respect.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Will my right hon. Friend make it clear to the House that it is his view,

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

having studied the figures, that it is of direct financial benefit to the United Kingdom to remain within UNESCO? Secondly, will he make it clear that, if we should come out, there is no guarantee whatever that the money saved will go to, for example, the BBC external services or to the British Council?

Mr. Raison: It is very difficult to say what the financial benefits are. I have explained some of the qualifying factors. There are others which have to be taken into account.

With regard to the important question of what we would do with the money if we were to leave UNESCO, I hope —indeed, I believe—that it would be retained within the British aid programme. Obviously, within the British aid programme a very strong candidate for its use would be activities related to education and science, which might be funded through the agency of the British Council. We have to bear in mind that there is potentially an alternative use for the money which could serve very much the same purposes as UNESCO serves.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister admit that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs received strong evidence from scientific bodies in the United Kingdom that it is not possible for the British Council to undertake most of the programmes that would be lost by our withdrawal from UNESCO, and that it is only UNESCO and similar multilateral organisations that can carry out these programmes?

Mr. Raison: We could continue to take part in some of the international scientific programmes, but possibly in some of the others we could not. My point is that if the money were to be switched out of UNESCO into my general budget, it could perfectly well be used on activities relating to education, science and culture in the Third world. We might well use the British Council to bring that about. Any loss to international scientific activities deriving from our withdrawal could be balanced by increased activity on our behalf. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Foulkes: The Opposition agree that there can be switches in the budget, just as huge chunks of the Minister's budget are now being improperly used in the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Raison: We have returned to politicisation of a rather irrelevant kind. I know that this is a political House, but my budget for the Falkland Islands is used for developmental work there.

The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs also dealt with universality. I can confirm that it is the Government's view that universality means the right to belong to, and participate freely in, the work of the United Nations and its associated bodies, rather than implying any obligation to be a member of all of them.

The international consequences of withdrawal is a complicated matter. There are two main aspects: the effect of possible United Kingdom withdrawal on our relations with our partners and friends, particularly in the Community and the Commonwealth, and the danger that such a withdrawal would leave the door open to mischief-making in UNESCO from other quarters. Our current assessment is similar to that of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which is that there would be little likelihood of others submitting notice of withdrawal before the end of the year. However, if we decide to leave, it would not be difficult to explain to other countries the reasons which underlay our decision.

Dealing with increased Communist influence would depend upon a number of imponderable factors. To suggest that, in the absence of the United States of America, only the United Kingdom can counter Soviet advances is far from complimentary to many of our closest allies and underestimates the good sense of our Commonwealth and other friends.

Before I leave the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs' report, I should refer briefly to the two specific proposals for further reform that it contains. These are, first, that the term of office of the director-general should be restricted in future to a single tour of six years, and, secondly, that an executive body of more manageable size than the current executive board of 51 members should be set up.

I find both those ideas well worth considering. They both relate to one of our major areas of concern—the relationship between the governing bodies and the secretariat. We believe that it has swung too far in favour of the latter and we cannot ignore the management weaknesses. I doubt whether it can be healthy for any international organisation to have had only two directors-general in 23 years, which is the case with UNESCO.

I have to warn the House that I can see some practical problems in pressing for these reforms. Both would require constitutional amendment. So far, we have avoided reform proposals which would require amendment to the constitution, for two reasons. First, constitutional amendments take time, since only the general conference can change the constitution. But we have also been very reluctant to pursue such proposals since, in doing so, we might encourage others to submit amendments to what we still see as a basically satisfactory document.

Clearly all this needs very serious thought. There could be other ways of achieving the same aims without formal constitutional amendment. For example, the board has now charged a renewed special committee of 18 members to follow the reform process, a function which it has taken over from the temporary committee.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, we committed ourselves to a final review of our decision to leave after the recent general conference. That is now being carried out. Our starting point must be an assessment of the outcome of two years' work by Ministers and officials in seeking to reform the complex organism which UNESCO has become. Other Governments will no doubt wish to make their views known to us.

Obviously there have been improvements. The main problem now will be to form a judgment on whether those measures are enough to meet the very serious needs, whether they will be properly implemented and how effective they will be. That depends on forming a view on whether the majority of member states and the director-general have wholeheartedly embraced the idea that reform is necessary and urgent, or whether they have, reluctantly, gone along with as much as they believed to be necessary to stop Britain and others leaving.

Sir Paul Hawkins (Norfolk, South-West): At the Council of Europe meeting in Strasbourg Mr. M'Bow arrogantly refused to answer almost 50 per cent. of the

questions put to him, and his answers to the remainder were entirely unsatisfactory. I believe that the full opinion of the Council of Europe, with Members of Parliament from 21 nations present, was that no reformation and progress—which I should like to see for UNESCO—could take place while Mr. M'Bow was still director-general.

Mr. Raison: I shall consider my hon. Friend's point in the context of today's debate.

Mr. Foulkes: This debate is not about whether we are in favour of Mr. M'Bow. It is on the much more important matter of whether we are in favour of UNESCO. That organisation is much more important than any man.

Mr. Raison: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the debate is about whether we should remain in UNESCO. There are many factors to consider on that score, and I am discussing them in my speech.

I cannot forecast the outcome of our review, but we will take account of the many and various factors involved before reaching a firm conclusion. I shall, of course, listen carefully to the views of the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO when it meets next Friday. We aim to announce our decision before the House rises for the Christmas recess. I assure the House that the decision on whether we should remain in UNESCO will not be taken lightly and that the Government will take note of the views expressed in the debate.

10.7 am

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The Opposition greatly welcome the debate as an opportunity for the Government to consult the House and we congratulate the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and my old sparring partner the hon. Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw), the Chairman of the Select Committee, on the excellent report that was produced.

This is a crucial debate not just for British membership and the future of UNESCO, but for other United Nations agencies and for the United Nations as a whole. The debate is a political issue and test of the United Kingdom's commitment to the Third world and to the multilateral organisations that are so vital to Third-world development.

It is important to remember that the impetus for the creation of UNESCO came from the United Kingdom. The first director-general of UNESCO was the distinguished British scientist, Sir Julian Huxley. Its external auditor is our Comptroller and Auditor General, and any new country joining UNESCO must deposit its instruments of adhesion with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I do not know what will happen if we maintain our decision to withdraw from UNESCO.

UNESCO has carried out important work over the past few years. Many hon. Members will have had representations about that work. Between 1979 and 1983, more than 1,000 operational programmes have been carried out in 100 states. That is vital work. The organisation has been involved in educational planning in developing countries and the construction of oceanographic research vessels, it has spent £31 million a year on scientific programmes, its campaigns have brought literacy to over 15 million adults and young people not attending schools, and it has also helped in the training of nearly 30,000 teachers. As the Minister will know better than most people, UNESCO has helped to provide water supplies in drought-ridden areas of Africa and elsewhere. In short, it has provided vital science and technology programmes for the Third world.

There can be no doubt in the House about the value of that work. As I said in an intervention, it represents the major part of UNESCO's work. The activities that the Government are challenging and questioning are a very small proportion of the work undertaken. The Government have a right and, I would argue, a duty to ensure that the organisation is working efficiently and effectively. The Opposition do not quarrel with that, and other countries would share the Government's view. However, the Opposition, together with the Select Committee, question the Government's tactics and threats, and our European partners who share our desire for reform also share the Opposition's concern.

It is important for us to recall that, as the Minister admitted, the process of reform had begun before the United Kingdom issued its notice of withdrawal. We give credit to the Minister for playing a part in setting the agenda, but, as he admitted, five working groups within UNESCO had been set up and, on their initiative, the temporary committee had accepted 117 administrative reforms, including the establishment of a central evaluation unit, before the United Kingdom issued its threat to withdraw.

Understandably, many people suspect that the United Kingdom's list of demands is a pretext and that the threat to withdraw is a political decision, made under pressure from the United States. It is suspected that there is a hidden agenda behind the Government's proposal.

We know that the American withdrawal had nothing to do with a desire for reform. Indeed, the United States permanent delegate spilled the beans when he said:

> "If all the management, personnel and budgetary reforms were agreed to, if UNESCO suddenly became the perfect model of administrative efficiency, management effectiveness and staff productivity, that still would not be enough."

The United States decision to withdraw was political. Not wishing to be isolated in the world, the Americans decided to take the United Kingdom along with them. They put intense pressure, overt and covert, on the British Government. Having publicly declared that America would exert no pressure, Secretary of State Shultz later publicly urged the United Kingdom to leave, as we read in *The Guardian* on 30 October. We heard again today that the Foreign Secretary has been discussing the matter with Mr. Shultz who, no doubt, has been turning the screw even further.

Mr. Raison: There is one basic rule, which is not to believe everything that *The Guardian* says. It is arguable that one should not believe anything that *The Guardian* says. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary saw Mr. Shultz yesterday. This matter was not discussed and there has been no pressure from the United States Government on us about this decision.

Mr. Foulkes: On this issue, I prefer to believe what I read in *The Guardian* than what I read in some other newspapers. I shall develop that aspect later.

Thanks to Gough Whitlam, the Australian ambassador to UNESCO, and *The Guardian*—the Minister may have doubts, but I have no doubts about what I have read—we know about the covert pressure co-ordinated by the Right-wing Heritage Foundation. That pressure has involved the former Australian ambassador to UNESCO,

[Mr. Foulkes]

Owen Herries, the United States ambassador, Jean Gerard, and some hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker). We know about the meetings that took place at the Garrick club to co-ordinate the plot to get Britain to issue the notice of withdrawal. If the plot did not exist and the plans were not made, I ask the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South and the Minister to deny the claims.

Hon. Members should not imagine that the Heritage Foundation plans to stop with UNESCO.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): I was comparing notes with my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins) when the hon. Gentleman referred to me a moment ago. Will he repeat what he said about me?

Mr. Foulkes: I said that the right hon. Gentleman and others, including the former Australian ambassador to UNESCO, Owen Herries, and the United States ambassador, Jean Gerard, were involved in discussions to put pressure on the Government to issue a withdrawal notice and to issue the ultimatum to UNESCO. If the right hon. Gentleman wishes to deny that, I shall be interested to hear what he has to say.

Sir Peter Blaker: I deny that instantly. I have met Mr. Owen Herries, whom I found extremely interesting in relation to UNESCO. He had direct experience there. I have never met Gerard.

Mr. Foulkes: My information is that meetings took place. The right hon. Gentleman has admitted meeting Owen Herries. All this was co-ordinated by the Heritage Foundation—a United States trust. The hon. Gentleman may wish to deny it publicly, but my information is that he was part of meetings organised by the Heritage Foundation which were designed to put pressure on the Government to withdraw from UNESCO. The right hon. Gentleman does not deny it.

Sir Peter Blaker: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do deny it.

Mr. Foulkes: We can check up on another occasion. My information is that the right hon. Gentleman was part of it.

Hon. Members should not imagine that the Heritage Foundation plans to stop with UNESCO. That is only the first of many. Last year, the foundation published an anthology entitled "A World without the United Nations", which suggested that the United States would be better off if it came out of other United Nations bodies, including the World Health Organisation and UNICEF. It even suggested withdrawing from the General Assembly. No doubt the British Government would be expected to follow obediently behind.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that many of the arguments against UNESCO, in terms of its administrative top-heaviness and the views expressed within the organisation, could be applied with equal force to other agencies, each of which, like UNESCO, is justified by the value of the work that it does and the general value of internationalism?

Mr. Foulkes: I accept that fact. No doubt there will be complaints about other agencies in the future. As I said earlier, the Government's proposal is important not only for UNESCO, but for other United Nations organisations.

Mr. Eric Deakins (Walthamstow): Does my hon. Friend agree that the United States has already shown its general policy towards the United Nations by virtually withdrawing from the United Nations fund for population activities? It was a major contributor to the budget, but the Right wing in the United States — the new moral majority — because of its opposition to abortion and family planning, has forced the United States to leave.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend is right. I am sure that he agrees that all this is inconsistent with the new spirit of detente that we saw in Geneva yesterday. Instead of our being encouraged to come out of UNESCO, we should be encouraging the United States to rejoin. That would be in the spirit of Geneva.

Let us examine the Government's demands and take them at face value. The Foreign Secretary's letter of 5 December last year is the key document. He wrote:

"If we were satisfied that substantial progress had by then been made in carrying through the reform programme . . . we would be willing to reconsider our decision to withdraw by the end of 1985."

The Opposition argue that substantial progress has been made, and I detected that even the Minister was conceding that great progress—perhaps not substantial progress—had been made. Perhaps it is a matter of semantics.

The Foreign Secretary demanded that there should be an identification of priorities within budgets. I think that the Minister admitted that the new budget adopted at Sofia has established priorities for the first time and that the emphasis is on practical programmes with a multiplier effect.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Has the hon. Gentleman seen the draft budget for 1986? Do the Opposition approve of the grant under major programme II of about $3,591,000 to such projects as the granting of fellowships to the Palestine Liberation Organisation?

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman asks whether the Opposition approve. The budget was adopted unanimously at Sofia, and we must assume that the Government approve of such grants, because they voted for the adoption of the budget.

Since the budget was approved, the new board has set up a timetable for the adoption of the targets and objectives set out by the Government and by the Sofia congress. The Minister admitted, and I was told yesterday by Mr. Ivo Margan, the much respected new chairman of the executive board, that a special committee of 18 had been set up to ensure that the budget is adhered to and that the targets are achieved. That seems to be a major step towards what the Government have been seeking.

The Government also asked for fewer studies and more action-oriented projects of direct benefit to developing countries. Between September last year and April this year, there was a 70 per cent. increase in the number of operational programmes undertaken by regional offices spending money directly on projects in member states. The Government's second objective has been achieved.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) intervened effectively when the Minister mentioned

the Government's third objective, which is that a lower priority should be given to major programme III — communications in the service of man. The Minister repeated the disinformation that we have had previously from the Heritage Foundation and from *The Times* which, on this issue, is fast being turned from a newspaper into a lobby sheet. Contrary to reports in *The Times*, not one resolution has been passed or application of funds made to any activity which could be seen as an attempt to restrict or censor the press. That was confirmed by the International Organisation of Journalists in Sofia.

The Minister made a speech at UNESCO in which he said:

"What we cannot accept, because it is fundamentally incompatible with the very nature of our society, is any implication that states have an obligation, or even a right, to prescribe to their media what should or should not be broadcast or written".

I do not know whether it was because of the Minister's overseas trip, but at about that time the Home Secretary was drafting the infamous letter to the BBC telling it what it should and should not show. We are accusing UNESCO of doing what the British Government are doing.

Mr. Raison: That is a travesty of what happened. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that the Government did not order the BBC to do anything.

Mr. Foulkes: That is not what the BBC, the public and most of the people who know think.

Let us come to what was described by the Minister and others as the single most important point — major programme XIII. Paragraphs (iv) and (v) of the Foreign Secretary's letter state that the Government hoped that there would be no duplication of work with other United Nations agencies, that areas of politically irreconcilable difficulties should be avoided and there should be nothing done to downgrade human rights. Major programme XIII, which was agreed in Sofia, contains no reference to any limitation of human rights. It includes firm measures to avoid duplication. I know that the Minister does not believe *The Guardian*, but I do and I think most of the Members in the House and people beyond agree with it. On 16 November *The Guardian* stated that Western Governments consider the United Kingdom

"obtained 'a great deal', and would be surprised if this particular programme could be used as an excuse for pulling out."

I have good reason to believe that that confidential American report, described in *The Guardian* report of 16 November, is correct.

The sixth item in the Foreign Secretary's list states that the budget should be reduced to take account of the shortfall resulting from changes in membership. Again, as I think the Minister conceded, at Sofia the budget was reduced to take account of the American withdrawal. After taking account of that withdrawal, the budget represents zero growth. I am sure that the Government would like to achieve that in their own spending programmes.

The Foreign Secretary's seventh demand was

"to avoid overlap with other UN bodies."

Again, account was taken of that in Sofia.

The Minister referred to increased efficiency. The Foreign Secretary's letter talks about the appointment of management consultants, greater efficiency and greater economy. UNESCO's accounts are regularly checked by two outside bodies—the UN joint inspection unit and, over and above that, our Comptroller and Auditor General. Any hon. Members who have served on the Public Accounts Committee will know how efficient and effective the Comptroller and Auditor General is. In his July report—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins) will accept this—while finding a great deal to worry about in relation to the common agricultural policy, he had no such criticism of UNESCO. The Government are not using his criticism of the common agricultural policy to suggest that we should withdraw from UNESCO.

Paragraph (ix) of the Foreign Secretary's letter talks about a shift of resources away from headquarters. Again, at Sofia decisions on the budget decentralised activities on human sciences, communications, culture, science and education. Action has been taken on all nine points set out in the Foreign Secretary's letter. We should argue that substantial action has been taken. That confidential United States report to Washington stated that the United Kingdom had "achieved significant improvements," and concluded:

"The final version of the programme left the British delegation 'generally satisfied' . . . Overall results . . . could enable the British Government to argue the case for continued membership — or, alternatively, require it to advance other reasons for a decision to withdraw."

The criticism has been met. If withdrawal is not rescinded by the Government, we can only conclude—and I think the vast majority of interested people can only conclude—that there must be some other reasons.

Let us come to the harmful and disastrous effects that will occur if the Government do not rescind their decision. First, it will seriously damage our relations with the developing countries and, in particular, the Commonwealth. The Minister said that we should respect the good sense of the Commonwealth and friends. The Commonwealth countries are unanimous in wanting us to stay in UNESCO. In an unprecedented approach, all 49 Commonwealth high commissioners last year went to see the Foreign Secretary and said, "Stay in." They have backed that request with another letter, which says:

"We are aware that your Government will soon be considering its position with regard to UNESCO and, in the context of your expressed wish to consult with Commonwealth Countries, we consider it appropriate to restate the value which we collectively place in Britain's membership of UNESCO."

If we respect the good sense of the Commonwealth and other friends, we should take some account of that letter. In Nassau, the Commonwealth Heads of Government said:

"We recognise that the United Nations and its institutions are not without imperfections"—

of course not—

"but are convinced that the solution lies not in their rejection but in their rejuvenation. Using the system effectively is as important as changing it."

That was signed by the Prime Minister. We assume that she knew to what she was putting her signature.

Not just the Commonwealth, but other friends, as described by the Minister, are interested. Every one of our EEC partners is expressing dismay. The Dutch and the French have been especially scathing. The press release from the French embassy on 27 November 1984—one expects embassies to be somewhat diplomatic—states that France

"deplores that decision particularly deeply since fruitful co-operation has been established between the member States and, thanks to certain joint initiatives by the two countries"—

Britain and France—

"we had succeeded in obtaining not inconsiderable improvements to the organisation's operation. . . . France hopes that Great Britain . . . will be able to reconsider her intention and remain inside the organisation."

[Mr. Foulkes]

Those are the views of our other friends.

On 29 April, the Foreign Ministers Council said:

"The Ministers of the Ten reaffirm their commitment to multilateral international co-operation and to the principles and purposes of UNESCO".

Again, presumably, the Foreign Secretary put his name to that. There were then a number of requirements which have been fully met by the Sofia conference.

The first reason for our not withdrawing is that it would be damaging. Secondly, as the Foreign Affairs Committee correctly said, it would be a breach of the principle of universality. Whereas the Minister shrugged that off slightly, I believe that it is important that we should participate in all the United Nations agencies.

The third reason is that withdrawal now would prevent consolidation of the process of reform which we have started. If any Western Government makes any more suggestions for reform, particularly if they are accompanied by any hint of withdrawal, they will be ignored if we withdraw. The United Kingdom representatives at Sofia said that continued British membership could ensure the success of the reforms.

Fourthly, many respected voices within the United Kingdom, apart from the distinguished members of the Foreign Affairs Committee who agreed the report unanimously, have been warning and counselling against withdrawal. The Royal Society, the Library Association and many others have pointed out—I say this because the Minister mentioned the British Council and I mentioned it in an intervention—that much of the work carried out by UNESCO could not be carried out by the British Council or any other national organisation, because it can be carried out only by international organisations.

Fifthly, for those who are interested in the balance sheet—the Minister was paring away at the positive balance that comes to Britain from membership of UNESCO and there may be some doubt about the amount—it is true that in terms of finance Britain is a net beneficiary of about $6 million. UNESCO does not cost us money; we make money. We receive more than we pay by being members of UNESCO.

It is naive to assume that there would be no loss of contracts to Britain if we were to withdraw. It is naive to assume that Canada, Australia and New Zealand could not provide English language books and other services that are necessary for UNESCO. Britain is favourably treated. Nearly 9 per cent. of UNESCO's staff are British, although we contribute only 4·5 per cent. of the budget.

At a time when North and South are increasingly realising their mutual interdependence—the survival of the rich North depends on the well-being of those in the poor South—and when East and West are beginning to get together positively in Geneva, it is madness to withdraw from an organisation as highly valued as UNESCO. It would be an isolationist step merely to appease American pressure. It has no objective justification whatsoever. The choice must be made now. I hope that the Minister will not contemplate postponing it for another year, suggesting another year's notice or any other form of compromise.

The Government must show whether they are genuinely interested in the reform that they started and whether they genuinely support multilateral co-operation. They must show whether they support the advice of the Commonwealth, of our EEC partners and of influential opinion within the United Kingdom to stay in UNESCO, or whether they wish to appease the United States of America and withdraw.

The Opposition are in no doubt. We believe, unequivocally, that the Government must rescind their decision to withdraw and that they should continue to play their full part in UNESCO.

10.32 am

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): The debate gives me the opportunity to say that if the Government persist in their notice of withdrawal from UNESCO they will be making a grave error that will have dangerous consequences. The decision will be one that many people inside the House and millions outside will inevitably regret.

The Government's argument is the need for reform. There is nothing new about that, nor does it apply only to UNESCO. In the first report of the Brandt commission there was a proposal for the reform of all United Nations institutions so that we could remove overlapping, reduce the bureaucracy and use the funds to better effect on the ground rather than at headquarters. I believe that that is still necessary, and that that it is the right approach.

My right hon. Friend the Minister said what has often been quoted, that the secretariat in UNESCO has too much power. Many of us believe that the problem of the United Nations now is that the secretariat has too little power. When the Secretary-General was a man of great substance and influence, the United Nations was able to achieve considerable results in international affairs. As we have reached the stage where the main purpose of the Security Council is to appoint somebody who has no influence or power, we have seen a grave fall in the achievements of the United Nations as a whole. My name on the Brandt commission report confirms that I support the reform of these institutions. That is a process that we go through in our own institutions, however laggardly we may be, as the debate two nights ago showed.

I would have expected my right hon. Friend to congratulate himself on the reforms that have been achieved. They have been remarkable, in such a short period. When we compare what has been done in UNESCO to deal with the criticisms with the time that it takes in our own governmental machine to bring about changes, we realise that my right hon. Friend should rightly be praised, and I hope that his colleagues will recognise that. Since he took office he has done a great deal to restore confidence, which had been completely lost, in the British Government's attitude towards developing countries and towards investment in the developing world.

There are points of individual criticism of UNESCO. My right hon. Friend said that he wants UNESCO to return to what it was at its foundation, when British had so much influence, and, as the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said, when we had a large percentage of personnel. We shall not return to that tradition, because at the time of UNESCO's formation most of the developing countries did not exist. Today they do, and they want to exert their influence. Our purpose must be to understand their outlook, and it is here that we come to the subject of a world order for communications.

Most of the developing world wants a world order in everything that it can think of, for the simple reason that

it believes that it gets a rough deal. Many of the international institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, were founded by the United States and Britain after we had won the second world war. The developing world had no part in that, and today it has only minute representation compared with what many of the countries are entitled to.

The developing world also wants a world order in the economic sphere. It does not want charity or aid, which my right hon. Friend fully realises. It wants the establishment of an international order that will give it a fair deal with the developed world. It is understandable that the developing countries should ask for a world order of communications. The danger, as my right hon. Friend said, is that many of them will require some form of control over the press and media. That is alien to our views, and we are opposed to it.

That problem might develop, because they do not feel that they get a fair deal from the press in the developed world of the North. The emphasis is constantly on maladministration, corruption and all the failings and weaknesses that correspondents point to in the life of a developing country. Those who live there feel strongly about that. The answer is not to have control of the media, but if we want to use our influence against that, we must be inside the organisation, not outside.

My right hon. Friend referred to the wishes of our friends, but there is no justification for taking any notice of the position of the United States in the matter. Those of us who know the United States intimately, and have done for a long time, know that it is passing through a time of intense and distasteful nationalism. It believes that it walks high and that the rest of the world has to do what it demands. It will get through that in time. It is an unpleasant reaction to the defeat in Vietnam. Perhaps we should try to understand that more.

At the end of the 1970s the United States pulled out of the International Labour Organisation, but it had to go back to it because it realised that being out of it damaged its own interests too much. The same thing will happen to Britain if we pull out of UNESCO. Every member of the Commonwealth has requested that we stay in that organisation. Are they to be ignored completely? If we ignore them, it will make a farce of everything that was said at the recent Commonwealth conference, and what is constantly echoed by Government spokesmen, from the Prime Minister downwards.

Similarly, our colleagues in the European Community want us to stay in UNESCO. Will we ignore them as well? If we do, it will again make a farce of everything that we say about a European point of view and working together with our colleagues in the Community. With the whole of the Commonwealth and the European Community demanding that Britain stays in, where is the international support for us to leave? It does not exist.

Most people to whom I have spoken have been full of praise for my right hon. Friend and his colleagues for what they have achieved in the change in UNESCO. There is "politicisation," to use a word as bad as "privatisation", but we ourselves politicise. Of course, we do. Whenever we take an attitude towards human rights, we politicise. Politicisation exists because representation in UNESCO is by Governments, not by individuals or by representatives of learned societies. If it were, it would not be politicisation, but would merely be a repetiton of the arguments in senior common rooms up and down the country, which are far more bitter and unpleasant. Therefore, I cannot accept that politicisation is an argument for withdrawal from UNESCO. It has been going on the whole time. We ourselves carry it on because of the views that we express. Therefore, I do not see any justification for withdrawing, and every loss to us through abandoning such influence as we have in UNESCO. We still have considerable influence, and that was shown by the record that my right hon. Friend gave us.

Above all, I ask my right hon. Friend to look at what has happened over the past six years and beg him not to make another mistake in the same direction. It may be that he has no intention of making a mistake, but some of his colleagues might persuade him into it.

We saw the change in grants for overseas students. That has proved disastrous. It has meant that we have lost thousands of students who want to come to this country to learn about our plant and machinery, understand our technology and speak our language. We shall never get those students back, because our friends and competitive rivals have provided for them elsewhere. What is more, they have done so on advantageous financial terms. The change that we made was a disastrous mistake.

The failure to give the British Council sufficient resources to meet the needs all over the world of people who want to speak English is another disastrous and continuing mistake. We should put the money into teaching English to the extent that everybody requires across the world. That spreads our culture and, with it, our trade and business.

The cut in overseas broadcasting was another disastrous decision. As my right hon. Friend knows, I travel considerably. Wherever I go in the world, I hear every other power pumping out its information on the radio throughout the day and night. In so many places one has the utmost difficulty finding out what is going on in one's own country through an overseas broadcast.

Those are all mistakes that have done us great harm. They have lost us influence and, what is more, they have damaged us economically. When so much of the Government's emphasis is on economics, either internally or externally, surely they must realise that economics is a question not just of economic equations, but of all the other aspects of life that affect our trade and economy at home. That is why those were grievous mistakes. If we pursue that thinking, we shall carry on the same line of mistakes, but I hope that we have learnt the lessons of the troubles that we have brought upon ourselves.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my right hon. Friend put on his little list our failure to sign the law of the sea convention, which does us immense harm as a great maritime power?

Mr. Heath: I agree with my hon. Friend. That drives one to ask what the reason is for that approach. I regret to come to the conclusions that I have reached. Some of my hon. Friends on the Back Benches will express themselves more eloquently than I can. I refer to the growth of a nasty, narrow-minded nationalism, which believes that we can survive without the rest of the world and, in its more arrogant form, believes that we can just tell the rest of the world what it should do. In a way, that lies behind the UNESCO decision. We think that we can tell the rest of the world, "Do what we say, or else we go", implying that our loss is so great that they are bound to do what we say.

[Mr. Heath]

In the modern world nothing could be further from the truth, but I regret to say that that is the motivating spirit underlying some of these decisions.

There are always those who dislike UNESCO because it does great international work. I have seen much of it myself. It is carrying on that work today, for example in the People's Republic of China. Look at its tremendous achievements outside Xian, where it is excavating monuments. How many of us in our time have helped to contribute to the protection, when the second Aswan dam was being built, of the great monuments south of the dam? All those things are well worth while. One man put against them irritating things, such as an attempt to get a world order on communications, or the fact that UNESCO is apparently trying to educate the Palestine Liberation Organisation, but I thought that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary had started that process. UNESCO is only following in our footsteps. There is nothing to blame it for in that.

Mr. Leigh: What about the money?

Mr. Heath: We could support UNESCO for 10 years on what we lost over the De Lorean scandal. Why can we not get the matter into proportion? Why should money not be spent on educating people to be more sensible than they are at the moment? I am strongly in favour of that—*[Interruption.]* I am not suggesting my hon. Friend. These things must not be taken personally.

We should learn from the lessons of the students, the British Council and overseas broadcasts, and accept that we have responsibilities, but above all that we get benefits and that we can have influence. Today, it is influence that we need. It is a question not just of doing it for the sake of it, but of doing it in the interests of our own country as well as those of the developing countries.

I therefore hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will be successful during Cabinet discussions in maintaining our membership of UNESCO, and that he will persevere in the reforms—he has already achieved a great deal—which should not be limited to UNESCO. They are required in other spheres that I have described. If my right hon. Friend can do that, he will achieve a purpose which many of us wholeheartedly support.

10.45 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has revealed, by the breadth and international commitment of his remarks, what a narrow view now seems to prevail in some quarters of the Government. I agree with him on every one of the decisions that he listed. He illustrated the narrow nationalism that seems to have taken over the Government. I hope that it has not taken over entirely and that today we can see some evidence of that.

In the first couple of paragraphs of his speech, the Minister sounded like a founder member of a golf club complaining about the newer members having standards of dress and conversation that made it impossible for him to remain a member. There was a patronising paternalism about the tone that has characterised many of the Government's remarks on the international scene. I do not say that his entire speech was like that because he proceeded to a systematic analysis of the problems and the steps that the Government had taken to try to put them right, as well as the progress made. He carefully left open at the end of the day what decision had been made. I wonder why he felt it necessary to have that purple passage at the beginning and to whom he was deferring in using that piece of paternalistic rhetoric. It is the kind of thing which we have seen elsewhere, in the leader columns of *The Times*, the output of the Heritage Foundation, and various other places.

Could it have been imagined by people such as Gilbert Murray, R. A. Butler and Julian Huxley, who were involved in the establishment of UNESCO, that, 40 years later, Britain would ever think of withdrawing from it when it was a large, active and flourishing body? The work that those people and many others did in setting up UNESCO was moulded by the experience of the war. That rings out in the constitution, which says:

"the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races."

It is interesting that both individuals' and people's rights find their place, even in that document. As a Liberal, I am as stern a critic as anybody of occasions when people's rights overtake individuals' rights, but the issue comes up in the affairs of every nation. What else were we discussing when talking about fluoridation of the water supply than whether there are circumstances where the claims of the people have to be set against those of individuals? On almost every occasion, including that one, I tend to incline towards the individual. But let us recognise that both those issues arise.

In its founding statement, UNESCO sought to create a new order. It was seeking the establishment of a new world order at the end of the war, in which the dissemination of knowledge and education would militate against the prejudices that had given rise to the horrors of Nazi Germany, which unleashed the great war.

These founder members could not have conceived that at this stage we would be seeking to take Britain out of UNESCO. The organisation's problem is simply that it has grown. It is not the organisation that those men established. It has many more countries in its membership, its administration is enormously larger as a result, and that immediately poses problems, as in any large international organisation. Membership has widened. It includes Governments who do not share or practise the values of the founders. They practise those values even less than we do. Who is to say that we, in every respect and action of government, abide faithfully by what the founders set out?

What should be our response to the fact that many of UNESCO's members do not share the values that the founders sought to propagate? It must be to fight on to ensure that the values are embodied in the work of the organisation. We should not say that the principal vehicle by which those values can be spread should be abandoned by the nation that was instrumental in establishing it.

Even if we are having difficulties in winning the way for those values in some debates and on some issues, we have also to set in the balance sheet the tremendous and continuing achievements of the organisation. Its projects have brought literacy to millions of people. It has done international work to safeguard historic monuments and sites.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup mentioned the work in the People's Republic of China and the Aswan dam. I am particularly aware of UNESCO's work in Venice, with which I have been involved, and of the tremendous efforts that it has made there. It has done work at the Acropolis, in Sri Lanka and all round the world on sites which, without international interest for both financial and political reasons, might not have been saved. It has done work on international scientific programmes, on the training of teachers, on the building of schools and on scientific and agricultural development projects. As hon. Members have said, alongside that are direct benefits to British publishers, to the makers and sellers of British equipment, to UNESCO scholarship holders from Britain, and to those whose professional training has been assisted by UNESCO. There are many ways in which Britain is a direct beneficiary of UNESCO's work.

Reasonable criticisms can be made of the way in which UNESCO has developed, and Liberals are not strangers to some of the issues. My noble Friend Lord Grimond was a vigorous critic of the United Nations relief and rehabilitation organisation for which he once worked. He experienced the inevitable mushrooming of administration that takes place in an international organisation made up of and with staff drawn from many member states. There are all the problems of translation to solve and pay for and the problems that go with particular states feeling that they must have office holders at different levels in the organisation. These serious difficulties, which damage and weaken international organisations of all kinds, have to be tackled constantly.

However, we might as well recognise now that such problems are inherent in international work, and then get on with the job instead of assuming that we can abandon such international organisations. If we leave UNESCO on this account, we shall have grounds for leaving the United Nations itself and just about every other international framework in which we are involved. I can think of only one body in which the Government might feel able to remain — the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation, which so far has only two staff and is based in Edinburgh. However, we should have to leave just about every other organisation because of the top-heavy administration that tends to grow.

There are problems in the internal power structure of UNESCO, on which attention has been focused in the dispute. Such problems have arisen before, and they cast a doubt on the future of Mr. M'Bow as secretary-general. I believe that the time has come for new leadership. One of the moves that would help not just on the issues about which Britain cares but on others, and would help to infuse a new spirit into the organisation, would be a change of leadership. However, as the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) said, we cannot determine the fate of an organisation on the basis of our views about the period of office of one incumbent and any shortcomings that he might have.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if we remain a member of UNESCO, and a member of the administrative board, we could determine who Mr. M'Bow's successor should be, which would be important?

Mr. Beith: Yes, I agree, and that opportunity would come relatively soon.

There are more specific criticisms about the programmes, their direction, the proliferation of studies at the expense of field programmes and of items in specific programmes or documents. In some cases, the Minister's criticisms were of documents produced for conferences rather than the decisions or resolutions of such conferences.

Those problems did not start yesterday—they have grown over the years. In its excellent report, the Select Committee made this point:

"It is our impression that, in their acceptance of certain consensus decisions in recent years, both the United States and the United Kingdom Governments (and other Western Governments) have fallen victim to a decision-making system which discourages the exercise of their votes in UNESCO's governing bodies, and thus tends to conceal real differences between member states on both administrative and policy questions."

Over the years, we have gone along with many of the things that we now criticise. The Government's motives in doing so may have been perfectly honourable. They may have felt, as is true in many situations, that it is better to reach a consensus between many countries or many people than to stick out and vote against a resolution on one account. However, as a result of pursuing that policy, problems have developed over the years, and we therefore cannot treat them as if they arose yesterday and represent a new attack on the value that we hold dear.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman mentioned when the British Government, no doubt unwillingly, went along with decisions. He may be recalling the occasion in 1970, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) was Prime Minister, when Great Britain acquiesced in the decision of the executive board to celebrate the centenary of that great humanitarian, Lenin.

Mr. Beith: One can uncover fascinating facts from looking at past minutes of bodies. That example has not been drawn to my attention before. If that is so, it makes my point for me. We have gone along with consensus over many years and allowed problems to develop. Perhaps a stand should have been taken earlier.

As the Minister said, there has been a significant and wide-ranging response to many criticisms — from the establishment of the working groups to analyse the programme and the agreement that the budget will not increase in real terms during 1985 and 1986 to the 117 administrative reforms carried out and the tone and outcome of the Sofia conference.

It would be hard to assess the Sofia conference in any other way than that there was a real response to the criticisms. I cannot imagine that all the press comments about British attitudes at the conference and all the reading of British attitudes by American and other observers is wholly misguided. If it had been, it would have been more vigorously corrected by now. I do not share the uncritical view of *The Guardian* held by Opposition Front Bench Members. *The Guardian* is often incorrect, and sometimes misguided, but it cannot have been far out in suggesting that British delegates were "guardedly satisfied" with what happened at Sofia. The American observers also thought that the British delegates were significantly satisfied with what took place.

The British delegates made strong efforts to get their way at Sofia, which suggests that they were genuinely trying to produce a satisfactory result. There were late-night telephone calls for fresh instructions and detailed work was going on, which does not suggest that people

[Mr. Beith]

went to Sofia with instructions from the Government to let the worst go through and thereby have the best possible excuse to leave. That would be the cynical view of what Britain was doing if our delegates had gone to Sofia seeking the worst possible outcome, going through the motions of resisting and then using the decisions as an excuse to leave. That is not how our delegation behaved. It clearly took a close and careful part in the proceedings and, having achieved considerable success, removed from the Government any excuse presented by those factors for leaving UNESCO.

In the meantime, a number of other things have happened. The Select Committee's report was a powerful criticism of the Government's posture, and, contingent upon a reasonable outcome at Sofia, argued strongly for Britain remaining in UNESCO. The Commonwealth Heads of Government conference recognised in its communiqué, which the Prime Minister signed, that the solution to the problems of United Nations institutions lies "not in their rejection but in their rejuvenation".

There was an appeal from the Commonwealth high commissioners for Britain to decide firmly to remain in UNESCO. In the face of all that, I do not see how the British Government can do other than make clear their intention to remain in UNESCO. If they do not, they will stand accused of retreating into narrow nationalism to which the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup referred.

On the American scene there is a determined retreat from internationalism inspired by the Heritage Foundation. That is illustrated by the United States attitude to the International Court. It has British echoes, too, in the attitudes of some people to various international issues. Some have argued that we should withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. I have no wish to see the same narrow nationalism sweeping this country.

The rhetoric of the Minister at the beginning of his speech encourages the development of that type of attitude, but I do not think that is true to him because the bulk of his speech illustrated a more careful analysis of what is happening in UNESCO. His speech provided the basis for the only decision that can reasonably be taken — that UNESCO is a body to which Britain should belong. Genuine attempts are going on to find solutions to its problems. It is an institution which Britain played a powerful part in creating. The constitution of UNESCO declares:

"the state parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth, and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives".

That is the spirit of Geneva and the discussions held there. In that spirit we can only remain in an organisation which we did so much to create and which does so much good.

11.1 am

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for coming to the debate for which the Foreign Affairs Committee asked on the decision about UNESCO. It is gratifying that he has come to ask us what we think.

Those who will speak today are likely to be in favour of staying in UNESCO, because the enthusiasts will come to the House, and those who do not feel strongly about it will stay away. However, my right hon. Friend will bear in mind the conclusion of the Foreign Affairs Committee —after considerable deliberation, and having taken all the evidence that we thought would be useful—that we ought to stay in.

It is easy to understand the disappointment that is felt by a number of people over UNESCO. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said that it was founded with only 25 members. Today, there are 160 members. As a Western power we have lost our majority opinion in UNESCO and, naturally, those who come to it new have slightly different interests from those of the West. They are interested in aspects of science and education, which are of direct benefit to themselves. Sometimes they go further and are interested in themes which might be hostile to the interests of the West. It is natural that they should choose new interests, and I do not think we should complain about that.

We do not like the proposal for a "New World Information and Communications Order". We believe that this will inevitably restrict press freedom, which is against our principles. I do not like the switch from human rights to people's rights. It is contrary to the United Nations charter and the Helsinki agreement. The question of human rights is the basis of the argument with the Soviet Union, which believes that the rights of groups of people are more important than the rights of the individual. UNESCO's proposed interference in the transnational companies, which are Western in origin, is also hostile to the interests of the West, and we are entitled to do what we can to prevent it.

Apart from those matters, there is a great deal of practical work which is good and which we support. Scientific work, the teaching of literacy, and cultural matters are of great importance.

The administrative efficiency of UNESCO is a fair target for the critics. I would urge, as others have, that we must accept a lower standard of efficiency from an international organisation which has a great number of members. There are problems with translation. UNESCO works in six languages, and this is slower and more expensive than working in one language. It is difficult to find the people to fill all the posts. It may be surprising that a number of people in UNESCO are related to the secretary-general, but I do not think that that is a matter of great importance. No doubt it is difficult to find people suitably educated for this type of work, and it may be that those who have connections with the organisation are in fact suitable.

It is generally recognised that a lot could be done to improve UNESCO. When the Foreign Affairs Committee visited Moscow, the Minister for Cultural Affairs agreed with this view. I applaud the tactic of threatening withdrawal. The tactic of the Government in threatening to withdraw did concentrate the mind of UNESCO. The sincere work of the British representatives during the year has convinced people that we had not made up our mind to withdraw and that we were working to reform the situation.

I do not see why people are upset by the various lobbies —the Foreign Affairs Committee is full of lobbies. We did not have one from the Heritage Foundation, but I do not see why it should not lobby. The hon. Member for

Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) was quite indignant about *The Times* leader, and we were quite indignant about *The Guardian*—one always ought to be indignant about *The Guardian*. I do not see why *The Times* should not write what it pleases. I am sure that the Government will not be influenced by the United States in studying this matter.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: The Minister criticised the article in *The Times* because of its inaccuracies. I share the Minister's view that a campaign should be based on truth.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: *The Times* may campaign if it wishes, *The Guardian* may campaign if it wishes, and I do not wish to stop the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley from campaigning if he wishes. I do not think he is a stinker because he does so.

Mr. Foulkes: *The Times* leader was full of inaccuracies, and at times was bordering upon lies about UNESCO. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will agree that that is not worthy of a newspaper with a history such as that of *The Times*.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: If we said that no credence should be paid to any newspaper that gets its facts wrong, we should have to give up reading newspapers. That might not be such a bad thing.

We want to know whether the conference at Sofia took a grip on the situation. It could not get down to detail, but the decisions that it was entitled to take were taken. It was a satisfactory conference. The new executive committee, with Dr. Margan, a distinguished Yugoslav and former vice-president of his country, as its permanent head, is just what we want. It has executive power and is not too unwieldy. It has only 18 members, rather than the 51 of the general committee. I believe that it will do the necessary supervisory work to ensure that we do not fall back into bad habits.

What will be the consequences of withdrawal? There will be a loss of British influence. Irrespective of whether we like it, there will be a loss of British cultural influence, which is more necessary now than ever before, even though we will remain part of some organisations, such as the Oceanographic Survey. We will disappoint the Commonwealth, which unanimously wants us to stay in. It would not appreciate being left on its own by the oldest member of the Commonwealth. We have a duty to refer to its opinion, which has been expressed forcefully and unanimously.

My right hon. Friend the Minister said that it is not too clear whether we shall gain or lose money. The cost is £6·4 million, but the difficulty is exactly the same as with student grants. If there is a loss, it will fall on my right hon. Friend's Department, but the benefits will be spread throughout the country to scientists and in various other ways. The cash for student grants came from the Department of Education and Science, but the benefits were out of all proportion to the money involved, as they were distributed throughout the country, to landladies, halls of residence and places of entertainment — the expenditure incurred by students living in Britain. They would have spent far more than the grant cost. That was a deplorable decision that will stay with us long into the future.

If we pull out of UNESCO, my right hon. Friend the Minister will be left with some cash. I was encouraged to hear his favourable reaction to the suggestion that the British Council or other cultural organisations would be able to pick up some extra activity. The British Council needs money desperately, as its funding has been cut repeatedly in the past few years. Such cuts are not in our interests. However, I hope that this money does not emerge to the British Council because I want us to remain in UNESCO.

Another of the consequences of withdrawal is that it would be a blow to the idea of universality. That concept is more important for the Third world than for us, but, as our material strength declines, we ought to have regard to the esteem in which we are held. We should therefore support rather than weaken institutions which represent the idea of universality.

Enough has been done about administrative reform. There is a new awareness in UNESCO that continuous reform is necessary for efficiency. The new committee of 18 is what is needed to supervise such reform. Perhaps the director-general has been there too long, but I am sure that that is not a fundamentally important matter. The programme, however, is less satisfactory. Nevertheless, I am convinced that we should stay on and try to improve it rather than leave and let it continue in what we believe are bad ways. We should listen to the pleas of the Commonwealth and our allies in Europe. I believe that the country's interests would be served best by our continuing to be members of UNESCO.

11.14 am

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): It is significant that, so far, every hon. Member who has spoken has favoured our remaining in UNESCO, although we know that the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) is hoping to catch the eye of the Chair and take an opposite view. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] If I am wrong, no doubt the right hon. Gentleman will correct me.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The right hon. Gentleman is usually wrong.

Mr. Benn: I have no idea of the Minister's personal views on this matter, but it has been suggested that he is a bit uneasy. I suggest that he looks to his Foreign Office speech writers a little more carefully, because, candidly, the arguments that he used were not credible and, if they were credible, they were frightening.

The right hon. Gentleman talked of centralisation. I do not wish to enter into domestic controversy, because we all hope to influence the Government, but we have the most centralised Government ever, who are wiping out local authorities. The Government have conveyed to Washington the power to fire cruise missiles from our territory—another example of centralisation. The right hon. Gentleman also based his argument on the size of bureaucracy, but if every bureaucracy in Paris were wound up we should not be members of the EEC or NATO. The right hon. Gentleman's argument that the threat of withdrawal is the only way in which to get change could be applied widely.

The most tragic argument, because it is an incredible example of what is sometimes called British hypocrisy, is to argue that Governments should not have control over the media. We have a most tightly controlled media in Britain. Every major appointment in the BBC is cleared with MI5. That information has come out since I worked for the

[Mr. Benn]

BBC. I was cleared at one stage. I have always held that up as a handy reference. The only link that I have with MI5 now is through my telephone. I hope that it listens to what I say.

The hon. Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw) talked about family relationships in UNESCO, but there is a relationship between the chairman of the BBC and a senior Cabinet Minister. Such connections are not confined to international bureaucracy. I read today that, although the BBC will lift the MI5 veto on members of the domestic services, it will continue for members of the external services.

I hope that nobody abroad thinks that we believe what the Minister said—that it is the basic principle of the British Government that they do not interfere with the media. During the Falklands war, for example, the Government's news management was phenomenal. I was in the House with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) during the Suez war. The Government then established the Sharq Al Adna radio station in Cyprus to control the news. We should not mislead the Third world into believing that British media are entirely without Government control.

Mr. Beith: Is the right hon. Gentleman doing a great disservice to the BBC overseas service, which much of the rest of the world regards as providing more objective news reporting than anything else that it can get? Would it not be a disservice if he left the impression that those who work for the BBC overseas service are anything other than objective?

Mr. Benn: I am torn, because the hon. Gentleman tempts me to mislead the rest of the world into believing that what they hear on the BBC does not come as a Foreign Office directive. I know a little about the overseas service, as I started my life there. I must tell the House what the world now knows, that the Foreign Office pays a grant for the overseas service—it is not done by licence. The Foreign Office appoints people and vets them. I would be misleasing the rest of the world, in so far as the rest of the world will read *Hansard*, if I were to give the impression that I, as a former BBC employee, thought that the BBC was as independent as the Government would like the world to think it is.

The Minister's most amazing reason why the Government do not like UNESCO is that some of its decisions are unacceptable to the Government. What is politics, except a discussion and a decision? I could use the same argument and say that I did not much care for the House of Commons because some of its decisions were unacceptable to me. The theory of non-political politics is peculiar to the Conservative party. On one occasion when I was canvassing, a lady came to the door and said, "We are all non-political here. We vote Conservative." That is an old joke, but it is true. The Minister and, perhaps, the Foreign Office think that if an international body passes a resolution that is unacceptable to the Conservative party, that is political, and if it is acceptable, it is non-political. That is part of the theory.

What I have loved best about the debate has been the sudden resuscitation of the quaint old idea that *The Times* is fair. I thought that the idea that readers of *The Times* expected higher standards died years ago. How can people think that when Rupert Murdoch runs it—the man who owns *The Sun*, and who insulted the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup in a vicious full page article entitled "Heath on the Couch" the other day? I sympathise with him, because the newspaper published an article "Benn on the Couch" on polling day at Chesterfield. Do hon. Members believe that Rupert Murdoch's newspapers, including *The Times*, are other than scurrilous sheets reflecting the views of their proprietor? I hope that I do not have to say that that is true to persuade the rest of the world to read *The Times*.

Then there is the theory of personal rights against collective rights. By "personal rights" the Minister means Rupert Murdoch's right to dominate the media of the Third world, and not the right of the people there to have their own network of communication. It is the right of the rich to dominate the media of the poor. That is what the United Nations is about. It is a new world political order to give the poor some equal political rights with the rich. That is what the Chartists were about—the right of people without property to have a voice alongside the people with property. The United Nations was established to provide that, and nowhere is it more important than in the area of information.

I do not want to use the argument about value for money, because if one reduces everything to monetarism one could creep along to the Chancellor of the Exchequer with a last-minute calculation and it would be fitted into his calculation. The UN is one of the best investments in the survival of humanity, and UNESCO is, in a way, the most important because, as its charter states, it recognises:

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

I am of the generation that remembers the spirit in which the UN was founded. I remember its first preparatory meeting in Central Hall in London, at which Gladwyn Jebb was the first acting secretary-general, and the commitment of Julian Huxley, and people like Ronald Adams, who was one of the founders and, indeed, one of the first directors of the British Council. I remember the commitment at the end of the war after the Nazi brainwashing of people, based on the idea that one race was superior to another. UNESCO was to be the response of decent people to that. Now we are told that because it has introduced resolutions about people's rights, and because its offices are in Paris and it is too centralised, Britain, which was its inspiration, should withdraw.

It is said that the British Council will fulfil UNESCO's role better, but the British Council has been cut. If the British Council could do it better, we may then be told that we do not have to be in any international organisation because we have British ambassadors. Before we know where we are, the narrow nationalism about which the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup spoke will have affected us and not just the Americans. Ex-empires are always dangerous. We were dangerous at Suez. Because we lost our power, we wanted to prove our virility at Suez and, more recently, in the Falklands, and the Americans are the same. I do not wish to talk about the conspiracy theory, because I have never believed much in it, but we should consider the real reason why the Americans want to leave.

I acquit the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South of being in any conspiracy. Nothing that he has ever done in his life has confirmed a suspicion that he works with others. For many years he has spoken for what I think of as the Right wing of the security services. That is how I

have interpreted his speeches. The Right wing of the security services believes that we cannot stay in UNESCO because it is a Communist organisation—it is a sort of Armageddon theory—and that somehow we will have to fight the Communists in the end and, therefore, we had better not sit down with them between now and then in case they influence us.

There is also a Left wing of the security services, which thinks that we should remain in UNESCO because if we leave the Communists will run it anyway. The idea that the whole of British policy should be balanced as to whether one supports the Right wing, like Chapman Pincher and the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South, or the Left wing, which is represented by the intelligent wing of the Central Intelligence Agency, is absurd. That is where all the pressure has come from. The other pressure comes from the big private owners of the media.

I made a laughing reference to *The Times*, which must be taken in that spirit, but the people threatened by the new world economic order are the media moguls. Miss Rosemary Righter has been writing stuff about UNESCO which is a disgrace to the profession of journalism, of which I have long been a member. Those articles have been designed to spread misinformation and falsehoods about an organisation which has a part to play in ensuring that my children and grandchildren are not destroyed by a nuclear war. The combination of the Right wing of the security services, which thinks that we will end up with Armageddon, and the people who run the big multi-national media has driven part of the American Government to withdraw.

I come to the argument of the Prime Minister—I say that more in hope that in accuracy—the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. It is not the whole of the United States that wants to withdraw. He knows as well as anybody that America does not take a common view. At one minute Reagan can be reading a speech written for him by one part of the Defence Department, and at the next he will be holding a fireside summit in Geneva. The United States is ambivalent about the matter. I do not know whether President Reagan even realises the contradiction between his tough Armageddon speeches and the cosy, folksy chat that he had with Mr. Gorbachev.

Although we have the bomb, we were not invited to Geneva. The only place where Britain can now have any influence on the educational, scientific and cultural matters which Reagan and Gorbachev, thank God, agreed should be developed is at the UN. The Prime Minister had to go to Brussels to hear what Mr. Reagan said about the summit. We are excluded from the top table, and when there is a common table, where we can all discuss those matters, we say that we do not want to be there. What sort of policy is that?

My fear is that in so far as this policy has any meaning, it is with a view to undermining the United Nations. The Minister did not produce a single argument that could not be used against the United Nations, as the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) said. I am sure that that cannot reflect the Minister's view, and he should be more careful about what he allows himself to be asked to say. One could argue that UNESCO has special problems, but one should not produce generalised arguments.

We need a real economic order, which is what the Brandt report was about, and we need an information order that is fair. Has anybody ever read anything about Ethiopia other than about the famine? Does any hon. Member know anything about the Ethiopian Government? I am not the spokesman for them. The world media have decided to project only the tragedy of the starving child in relation to Ethiopia. I challenge any hon. Member who has not been there to tell me where on the BBC or in our media he has ever heard or read about their inheritance of problems or what the Ethiopian Government decided to do. I have read nothing of it. The Western media cast the Third world like a casting director casts an actor in a play—either as extremists, failures, incompetents or bureaucrats. It never lets us know the truth. That applies even to the BBC, to which I contribute through my licence fee. The Third world should have its own information system.

A similar issue arose on Monday when the Government decided that even an elected council in a local authority should not spread any record of what it is doing in its area. The Local Government Bill is designed to black out any view other than the Government's. Withdrawal would blank out any opportunity for Third world countries to communicate with each other and the rest of us about what they are doing.

I hope that the House has persuaded the Minister against withdrawal. One point that my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) did not make, although I am sure that he would not dissent from it, is that if Britain withdraws from UNESCO under this Government, it will rejoin it under the next.

11.30 am

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): More years ago than the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) or I would care to mention, we had neighbouring rooms in the same college at Oxford. At that time, our political views were rather closer than they are now, but I seem to remember that from time to time I had to put him right on his facts. If I were to put the right hon. Gentleman right on the errors of fact in his speech today, I would take so long that others would be unable to contribute.

I recommend that the right hon. Gentleman study the draft resolutions on the new world information order that were before UNESCO at the 1980 conference, when I led the British delegation and when we began the free world's fight against that order. Under the proposals for the licensing of journalists, it would be doubtful whether the right hon. Gentleman, in his profession as a journalist, would receive a licence from many Governments, because he is so radical.

I, too, have been studying the constitution of UNESCO. One is struck at once by that ringing phrase:

> "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed."

However, one must consider how the founders proposed that that objective should be achieved. After reading article 1, headed "Purposes and functions", it becomes immediately apparent that the founders intended that the defences of peace should be constructed by practical means and practical developments in education, science and culture; not through flatulent resolutions and confrontation, but through co-operation; and not through resolutions that emphasise people's rights—by which I understand states' rights—at the expense of individual rights.

[Sir Peter Blaker]

UNESCO has gone wrong by emphasising too little its practical work, some of which has been creditable, and indulging too much in words.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Will the right hon. Gentleman redefine what he has just said? He implied that people's rights are synonymous with states' rights. If he reads again the relevant UNESCO material, he will realise that that is inaccurate.

Sir Peter Blaker: I do not suggest that they are identical, but it is too easy to make the transition from people's rights to states' rights.

Mr. Benn: Would the right hon. Gentleman endorse the people's rights laid down in the constitution of the United States?

Sir Peter Blaker: I would need to refresh my memory about the United States constitution, but I believe that the emphasis is on the rights of the individual. The rights of the individual are worth emphasising more than the rights of the state.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) rightly pointed out that since UNESCO was founded, many states have joined and the composition of the body is entirely different. That should make no difference to UNESCO's purpose. The fact that so many of its members are from among the developing countries makes it more important to concentrate on practical help in education, science and culture for the developing world. UNESCO has done an excellent job in literacy, by projects relevant to the work of the Natural Environment Research Council, by the preservation of monuments, and so on.

I wish to return to the new world information order, with which I had a personal involvement in 1980. When Mr. M'Bow spoke a few days ago in the Grand Committee Room, I asked him what his position was on the new world information order. He replied that no one could be keener than he on freedom of information. However, he did not explain the division of opinion about the order between the free world and those who supported the proposals. Those who proposed the resolutions had in mind freedom of information for states, not for the individual. Those resolutions could easily have been used to justify state control of the media in the developing countries and in the countries of eastern Europe.

Many developing countries have serious deficiencies in information matters. They need more technical training of journalists and more equipment. UNESCO should devote itself to that type of matter. It does so to some extent, but, in my view, too little.

One can go further than that when discussing the practical things that UNESCO can do. UNESCO should concentrate on a limited number of projects—one or two in education, one or two in science and one or two in culture. It should not spread itself over too wide an area.

It would be useful if UNESCO studied what the World Health Organisation and the Food and Agriculture Organisation are doing. For example, the FAO puts much of its practical efforts into remedying losses after harvest, such as losses of grain, which can amount to about 30 per cent. of production. UNESCO could copy that example.

When Mr. M'Bow spoke the other day, I asked him what percentage of staff employed by or on contract to UNESCO are employed in Paris and what percentage are employed outside Paris. He said that he did not know. That is an extraordinary reply from a man who has been director-general of UNESCO for 10 years. I should have thought that would be a major factor in his mind, given the purposes of UNESCO as set out in the constitution. If he did not know, that betrays monumental ignorance. Perhaps he did not want to tell us. If not, the implication is that he did not wish to reveal the percentage. Perhaps when my right hon. Friend the Minister replies he can give us what information he has on the matter. What is the percentage of those employed or under contract to UNESCO who work in Paris and what is the percentage of workers in the field? I understand that more than 75 per cent. of the UNESCO budget is spent in Paris.

When Mr. M'Bow's term of office expires, we must find a new director-general—someone who will take a much better grip on the organisation and divert its energies into the proper channels. There is a difficult structural problem, in that the size of the executive board at 50 members is much too big. I welcome the fact that a new committee of 18 has been set up, and I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw) said about what that implies. I also endorse the Select Committee's recommendation on that subject.

What should the Government do? It is clear beyond doubt that the action of the United States Government, in giving notice that they would quit and then quitting, and the actions of the British Government in giving notice, were the principal factors in producing the changes that have occurred during the past 18 months. I pay tribute especially to the actions of my right hon. Friend the Minister and the Government in securing a momentum for change. The House should understand that we carry weight in UNESCO which is much greater than our contribution to the budget should warrant.

Mr. Foulkes: Why?

Sir Peter Blaker: Because of our experience and knowledge of international affairs. We have not achieved as much change as I would have wished, but we have had some results.

The Government face a difficult decision. If we leave, we shall be told that we are churlish and that we are letting down those who have supported us—many countries and individuals have supported our efforts enthusiastically—and gone along with our pressure for reform. It is said that if we leave, we shall no longer influence the organisation. That is not necessarily true. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup quoted the example of the United States leaving the International Labour Organisation and then, as he said, being obliged to return. That is a misreading of what happened. The fact that the United States left the ILO had a beneficial effect on that organisation. It rapidly induced desirable changes, and the United States felt able to return.

However, if we simply announce that we shall stay in UNESCO, there may be a danger that those who were content with the old position will sit back and say, "The British are staying, so we need not press on with the reforms." We must bear in mind that the time that has elapsed since we started our campaign for reform in earnest at the beginning of 1984 has been relatively short. To secure adequate reforms in an organisation as large and as cumbersome as UNESCO requires a longer period than

has elapsed. Therefore, I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister: should we consider extending our period of notice? Would that not help us to secure a satisfactory successor to Mr. M'Bow and to maintain the pressure for reform?

11.42 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): We have heard several helpful speeches during this interesting debate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said that every speaker before him had made the case for remaining in UNESCO. Having heard the right hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker), I could say exactly the same. The right hon. Gentleman's speech did not contain a shred of evidence for saying that Britain should make the profound decision to pull out of UNESCO —quite the reverse. All the arguments that we have heard, not just in this debate but in the wider international debate, suggest that the Government have made a grave mistake. Worse than that: in the light of the Geneva discussions, the Americans may decide to rejoin, and what will our position be then?

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in a logical speech, as one would expect, observed that the vote on televising our proceedings the other evening may be some sign of the way in which people are thinking. I can only hope that, since the Prime Minister changed her mind so often on that issue, she will do the same on UNESCO. It would be helpful.

Mr. Foulkes: Does my hon. Friend also hope that, since it is reported that the Prime Minister always does the opposite of that recommended by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), on this occasion she will be rather bigger than that and will make the right decision, irrespective of what the right hon. Gentleman says?

Mr. Clarke: I am sure that the House understands my hon. Friend's point.

We have heard several lectures — if not in today's debate, certainly elsewhere — about the alleged incompetence of UNESCO. That is surprising. The truth is that, whatever decision the Government eventually take, few people would say other than that their approach has been hamfisted in the extreme. The summary of events at the conference in Bulgaria reported by *The Observer* reads more like a comic opera than a serious discussion on a serious issue. It summarised the contribution of the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by saying:

> "If the object of diplomacy is to clarify a state's position, Mr. Eggar's appearance on the international diplomatic stage must be accounted a failure, since his interventions have left everyone totally confused."

The Minister's speech this morning seemed to imply that confusion was the Foreign Office's policy.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman accused the Government of being hamfisted and said that they had made a grave mistake. I thought that it was commonly accepted by hon. Members on both sides of the House that the threat of withdrawal has resulted in reforms. If Britain were unilaterally to rescind that threat, the organisation might return to its old ways and we could never again threaten to withdraw. Was that not the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker)?

Mr. Clarke: There is little evidence for that. In any case, if we continually threaten to withdraw from all the organisations associated with the United Nations, people will not take seriously our commitment to the United Nations.

There have been several references in the debate to *The Guardian* and *The Times*. I refer especially to an excellent letter from Professor Holister in *The Guardian* today, which makes some important points. Professor Holister has made an immense contribution as the director of the division of technology. Here is someone from the United Kingdom reminding us that Britain has made a contribution to UNESCO and is capable of continuing to do so and even expanding it. He reminded us — the Minister did not deny it in his opening speech—about the money that we get back and about the services that we obtain in return for our contribution.

I do not believe that any of us are convinced that the argument ought to be confined to finance. It is a much wider issue. What about Britain's influence and its impact upon the Third world? This country could make an intellectual contribution to UNESCO. Why should we be afraid of the battle of ideas? The Government appear to be afraid of it. The Minister for Overseas Development referred to Communist rhetoric. If President Reagan had thought that he should go nowhere near Communist rhetoric, he would never have gone to Geneva.

The English language has made a great contribution to UNESCO's work, and long may it continue. If Britain is absent from UNESCO, there can be no certainty about the volume of that contribution. These are important issues.

Apart from the Government's hamfistedness, many people are entitled to say that there is an element of hypocrisy in the Government's approach, and their view is justified.

The right hon. Member for Blackpool, South referred to the changes that had taken place, but that was because Britain called for and obtained reform in 1984-85. Despite that reform, we have not said that we are prepared to reciprocate and show good will. We have not demonstrated that we are not nit-picking and that we are profoundly committed to UNESCO's work and principles. In the absence of good will, many will conclude that Britain is looking for an excuse to leave UNESCO and that it is ignoring the progress that has been made. By doing so, Britain is following in America's footsteps prior to Geneva — an attitude which represents intellectual isolation.

The Government appear to be putting their relationship with the United States on a far higher plane than they are the demands of the Third world. We live in an imperfect world, and an international organisation like UNESCO is bound to reflect that imperfection. That does not give the Government the right to say that Britain is not prepared to make a major contribution to UNESCO in an effort, not just to improve it, but to increase its effectiveness within the United Nations. The United Nations would be immeasurably weakened if we decided to withdraw from UNESCO.

The self-imposed isolation that the Government appear to be considering for Britain is in stark contrast to the decision of every other European Community country. Are we to ignore the European Community and the Commonwealth? Are we so arrogant that we are saying that every Commonwealth country has got it wrong and that Britain has got it right? Are we so ignorant that we

[Mr. Clarke]

are prepared to ignore the views of the Canadian Government? They say that we have taken a wrong decision.

In his excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) referred to Gough Whitlam's views. I heard Mr. Whitlam's views when he visited this country a few months ago. There is no doubt in my mind, having heard them, that the opposition to UNESCO has been contrived in a completely negative and unhelpful manner. It is not just its presentation which appals hon. Members, but the fact that this campaign has been conducted in a manner which completely ignores the facts that have been presented by every Commonwealth country, by the United Nations and by those who want this country to continue to make a contribution to education, science and culture. They feel that there is very little merit, not just in the ignoble presentation of the case against UNESCO, but in the case against UNESCO itself.

If Britain withdraws from UNESCO, it will mean that of the 160 member states of UNESCO left after the withdrawal of America, we shall be the only country that has decided that it can no longer even attempt to change those things which it believes ought to be changed. As for the unspoken comments about Mr. M'Bow, this organisation is bigger than he or anybody else. One cannot judge the United Nations on the quality of its Secretary-General, high though that quality has almost always been. If we were to judge the Overseas Development Administration by the quality of the Minister who is in charge at a particular time, what problems there would be for those in this country who want forward-looking policies to be pursued.

For those reasons, the Heritage Foundation has done a great disservice to the progress of humanity, education, science and culture and to those hon. Members in the House who are interested in international progress, and particularly progress in the Third world. The arguments against withdrawal from UNESCO are overwhelming, and I plead with the Government to end the agony of this discussion. It is internationally unhelpful and unproductive.

If the Government will not heed the overwhelming views of the international community, but insist on going ahead with this lunacy, we must welcome the declaration that a future Labour Government will ensure that we return to UNESCO and that sanity may be restored in these international matters.

11.56 am

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Much has been said in the debate about the media—*The Guardian*, *The Times* and many other forms of communication—which shows that our Select Committee system is well justified. That applies particularly to the fifth report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on UNESCO in trying to achieve an independent assessment of the situation.

None of us went into that inquiry with a pre-set idea of how it would turn out, and both here and in the United States that report has carried much—and hopefully will carry even more—weight. I have been in correspondence with an American Congressman, Jim Leach, who informs me that portions of our report were inserted in the *Congressional Record* for 6 November. He tells me in a letter:

"The report itself is very interesting and reaches conclusions which I believe to be as relevant to the United States as to the United Kingdom."

The timing of this debate is interesting, for the background to the issue has now changed. The original pressure on UNESCO began in the United States in the pre-Geneva period, and the rhetoric of 1983 and 1984—detailed in our report—concerned, among other things, the shooting down of the Korean airliner and the situation in Grenada. There is clear evidence to show that that rhetoric caused the United States Government to make their decision.

That decision was made without the support of many people in America, and certainly not with the support of the people from whom we took evidence. For example, Dr. James Holderman, president of the University of South Carolina and chairman of the US National Commission for UNESCO, said:

"The Commission is convinced that the best means of serving US interests in UNESCO is to press for reform from within."

When giving evidence to Congress on 2 May, Dr. Holderman said that after submitting the results of the survey to Assistant Secretary Newell, Mr. Newell

"called me to ask if there weren't some negatives that we could add to our report, to give it what he termed 'credibility'."

He concluded:

"It is difficult to escape the impression that the Administration chose for ideological reasons to ignore perspectives which did not match its preselected policy option. It is simply a myth to assume that outside a few political appointees in the Administration there is much institutional support for the US withdrawal from UNESCO."

That was the background to the pre-Geneva period. Now we are in the post-Geneva period, and it is a very welcome change. I wonder whether some of the people who let the UNESCO decision go through the United States Congress and Senate, and who gave President Reagan a deserved standing ovation yesterday, would take the same view now. It seems strange, when we are talking about fresh starts and new starts and signing—properly, helpfully and supportively—a cultural and educational treaty with the Soviet Union, before the eyes of the world at Geneva, that we should now be debating whether we should leave UNESCO. That is the first and major point to be considered today.

If Secretary of State Shultz talks to his opposite number, the Foreign Secretary, I wonder whether he will argue that it would be helpful if Britain not only stayed in UNESCO but provided an avenue for the United States to rejoin. That would be much more in line with the post-Geneva policy of that great country than with its pre-Geneva policy.

With regard to the political pressure within UNESCO, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said, UNESCO is in no way different from any other United Nations agency, so it is hard to see why we should have to make a judgment on that aspect.

We know that the countries of the developing world have influenced and changed UNESCO, and we have to respond to that debate. Many hon. Members have spoken eloquently about whether we should support the United States decision or support our Commonwealth and many other friends among the 160 nations in UNESCO who

want us to stay. I hope that I have established that that choice is not quite as dramatic as it might have appeared initially.

I support the major recommendation of the Select Committee that it would be damaging to our interests and to our friends if we left UNESCO and lost the contact and support of our many friends there.

Is quitting the British way? I suspect that it is not. The British way is to stand our corner, use our influence, and try to ensure that UNESCO responds to its highest ideals, in concert with our colleagues.

With regard to finance, two matters are clear. First, the money that we give to UNESCO is not a financial burden. Secondly, whatever the amount, it is clear that Britain gets back more than it puts in.

Some people suggest that we could make better use of the money in a bilateral way by giving it to the British Council. There can be few greater supporters than myself of the British Council. Some of us have frequently given great support to increasing its budget, but that is not what we are discussing today. The question is whether £5 million invested in UNESCO does far more good than £5 million added to the £72 million that we give to the British Council.

Professor Fage, who knows what he is talking about, said in evidence to the Select Committee:

"Conversely, UNESCO is important to the United Kingdom. Much of UNESCO's and the world's business is done in our English language. In part for this reason, UNESCO looks to the United Kingdom for substantial numbers of the advisers, consultants and instructors it needs to send out to the Third World and other countries. This inevitably creates more business for UK manufacturers, supplies, publishers, television companies, et cetera. Our language, our ideals, our influence all spread as a result. I do not think that we should lightly shut ourselves off from this established international mechanism for winning friends and advancing our interests."

That shows that we could use the money more effectively through aid agencies than by adding it to the already valuable and important work of the British Council, which many hon. Members would like to see extended.

As my right hon. Friend's opening remarks revealed, the nub of the case is that we want to reform UNESCO because in certain areas it is ineffective and wasteful. All hon. Members would agree with that. My hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Sir A. Kershaw) said that, when this matter was raised with the Soviet Union in Sofia, not only did the Russians wish us to remain in UNESCO, but they accepted that it needed reform.

All hon. Members accept the need for reform and we have all paid tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister for his efforts in trying to achieve reform. All the reports from Sofia suggest that all the movements have been in the direction that we have been seeking and are in conformity with the guidelines we set down. We now know that a special committee of 18 members has been established to continue the work of the temporary committee. The special committee has not been a flash in the pan. People will not be able to sit back and say, "Well, we have persuaded Britain to stay in UNESCO, so we can now return to our bad old ways." A sense of reform has been established and it has wide support. Without us, it might lose momentum because we led and gave it direction.

There are two options. First, we can remain a member and be seen to be playing our traditional role, furthering the needed reforms and providing an avenue for the United States to return to the organisation. I believe in the principle of universality in the sense that the major powers should be involved in every United Nations organisation, because without them the organisations lose their credibility. We want to see UNESCO continuing to perform a worthwhile job and improving upon its work under the influence of the major powers.

The second option is to leave UNESCO, but that would be seen as a rather empty gesture. We would be seen to be turning our backs on our own concept which established UNESCO and its purpose, and would lose status with our friends. Above all, we would be giving people a sense that we were no longer able to make a rational and fair decision.

We set down in reasonable terms the reasons why we wanted reforms in UNESCO, and we have received reasonable responses. If we then find additional reasons — which are not revealed in the report and have not been revealed so far in the debate — for leaving UNESCO, we shall be seen to be acting in a shameful way.

12.3 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I do not know whether the Minister has changed his speech writer since the speech he made on the 14 October in Sofia. I remind him of the preamble to that speech and of its peroration. In the preamble, he said that he had studied carefully the constitution of UNESCO and was impressed "by the feeling that UNESCO was about people rather than Governments".

The right hon. Gentleman went on to say that he was struck most forcefully by

"the success with which the draftsmen had blended the high idealism of such famous phrases as the one in the preamble about wars beginning in the minds of man, with the strictly practical concerns for education, science, culture and communication expressed in article 1".

The Minister ended his speech with a challenge about the tide of reform running in UNESCO, which he said should not be stemmed. He stressed that it was necessary to safeguard the worthy future of UNESCO and ensure that future generations could look back upon the Sofia general conference as a real victory for UNESCO.

I hope that we will be able to look back at this debate in response to Sofia as a victory for UNESCO. We have already had a technical victory, as there has not been one speech completely committed to hard-line withdrawal from UNESCO, although some Conservative Members may alter that balance when they speak.

In stressing the combination of idealism and practicality, which is the essence of UNESCO, the Minister was echoing what the director-general told the Select Committee. He said that UNESCO is

"the only international agency with a constitutional mandate to promote intellectual co-operation".

The director-general quoted the executive board's decision on the need for

"a suitable balance between activities relating to study and reflection and those of an operational character".

I suspect that much of the criticism of UNESCO from outside the House is based on a failure to understand the role of the organisation. It is not a practical development agency. It is a multilateral agency devoted to intellectual co-operation. Perhaps one reason why the Government have been so unhappy about UNESCO is that they are basically unhappy about intellectual co-operation. They have a problem with the discussion of ideas. Perhaps the recent efforts of some Ministers to promote ideas in home affairs demonstrate the poverty of those ideas.

[Mr. D. E. Thomas]

It is important to get the balance right. We should stress the content of the UNESCO work programme and the balance between its intellectual or idealistic view in its future approach to problems and the practicalities with which it concerns itself.

The organisation has programmes for dealing with world problems, education for all, communication, the application of education policies, training, sciences and their application to development, information systems and access to knowledge, the principles and methodologies of development, science and technology and its relation to society, the human environment and terrestial and marine resources, culture and the future, the elimination of prejudice, intolerance, racism and apartheid, peace and international understanding, human rights and the rights of peoples and the status of women.

I have itemised those 14 major programmes because it is important for us not to get embroiled in the minutiae of programmes which seem to worry people outside. In the 1984 budget, 37 per cent. of spending was on education, 30 per cent. on the sciences, 12 per cent. on development and related matters, 11 per cent. on culture, 7 per cent. on communication and only 3 per cent. on human rights, racism, apartheid and peace programmes.

I shall concentrate on the education programme, because I am interested in education policy. It is important to stress UNESCO's work on illiteracy and its success in reducing the rate of illiteracy in the world from 32·9 to 28·9 per cent. during the 1970s. However, the number of illiterate people increased from 760 million in 1970 to 814 million in 1980. If we set those figures against the UNESCO programme to bring literacy to 15 million adults, we see the size of the problem confronting us.

There is also an emphasis in the UNESCO programme on the need to bring education and literacy to underprivileged groups, inhabitants of rural areas, women, the handicapped and cultural minorities. The programme is all about equality in the provision of education. The education-for-all programme emphasises the need for primary education for all children. Emphasis is also placed on the need for democracy in access to education, irrespective of the race, sex or class background of those seeking educational opportunities.

That work emphasises internationally the way in which an agency can identify worldwide education problems and seek to combat them by a combination of an approach based on an intellectual assessment of the best strategy and practical programmes, such as those in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. The programme focuses particularly on illiteracy among women, because sexual inequality in our society is mirrored strikingly worldwide. The agency's education programme provides its main work, and yet we have heard little from the opponents of UNESCO of the effectiveness and importance of that work.

I shall not go into detail about the agency's work on the basic sciences, because I never was and never will be a basic scientist. The issue was well documented in the Select Committee's report. The evidence from the Natural Environment Research Council is the most direct evidence of the disadvantage to the United Kingdom if there were to be a withdrawal. UNESCO is the only organisation within the United Nations system which has an explicit responsibility for social and human sciences. That is a form of international collaboration which we should be promoting rather than reducing.

The other subject which is of interest to me as a representative of a minority culture is UNESCO's role in that area. It is not just the essential and much publicised work of promoting cultural monuments, but its promotional activity in relation to cultural identities that is important. UNESCO has done a great deal of work in encouraging national and regional languages, preparing histories of different cultures in its massive translation programme, from which British publishers have benefited, and its work on minority languages and the translation of works from minority cultures.

I should declare an interest as someone who spoke with UNESCO support at a conference earlier this year on publishing in minority languages. That work is not as publicised or controversial as some of the work that has received attention from the media and the House. However, it is an important part of international collaboration among peoples of minority cultures as well as of majority cultures. It is international recognition of the diversity of human kind. That is why I agree with the Minister when he says that UNESCO is an organisation whose emphasis is on people, rather than on the work of Governments.

Much of the argument about UNESCO's future has concentrated on the MacBride report published as "Many Voices One World" and on the "New World Information and Communication Order". We must set the arguments about a new information order in the context, as I said, of UNESCO's work and, as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said, in the context of the nature of the international media system as it is at present organised and the domination of the capitalist information system in the world system. Developing countries have 70 per cent. of the world's population, but these people possess only a small proportion of the means of communication—20 per cent. of the books, 17 per cent. of newspapers, 9 per cent. of newsprint consumption, 27 per cent. of radio transmitters, 18 per cent. of radio receivers, 5 per cent. of television transmitters and 12 per cent. of receivers. There is an imbalance in the present disorder of world communications. Discussions should be about how we improve access to the communications media, and not about the last-ditch stand of the Western news agencies and their owners. UNESCO's work on a pan-African news agency, a Latin American special information services agency, the Arab project for communication and the Asia-Pacific news network is a realistic attempt to achieve a balance in the present imbalance of the disinformation order worldwide.

I stressed that UNESCO is not a development agency, but it has done a great deal of work in promoting international collaboration and understanding on all forms of development. It has stressed the need to change attitudes towards development, to see it not in terms merely of economic growth, but in terms of the cultural adaptation which is necessary for development and of the development strategies which include the participation of the people who are essentially part of the development process and who are supposed to benefit from it. It places an emphasis on training, and that is why all the talk about giving fellowships to the PLO must be put in context. By 1989 UNESCO will have provided 15,000 fellowships. It

is the emphasis on training, including people within the development process, that is an essential part of UNESCO.

Disarmament and the role of UNESCO in peace negotiations is precisely the sort of work, as we have heard, that should arise out of the Geneva agreement. Such work involves developing the understanding of peace and the need for disarmament, and should lead to an understanding of the psychological blocks to disarmament. That is where UNESCO does its work.

I want to discuss the issue of the rights of peoples, as compared to the rights of individuals. It is time that we got over that sterile argument. Rights belong to individuals, and they also belong to individuals as members of particular groups. Rights belong to women as members of that gender, and to black people. They belong to people as part of the production process, and they should ensure that people have access to education and the social services. How a group is organised within society affects the human rights of individuals. UNESCO's work on racism and apartheid is important, because we must think in terms of the rights of peoples. The United Nations charter begins by saying:

"We the peoples of the United Nations"

The concept of people's rights is essential to a concept of human rights. One cannot think of human rights in terms of individual rights without seeing those individuals as part of collectives. We can think of collectives without falling into the trap of believing that only collective rights are human rights. It is important that we consider the argument and understand it in terms of equal priority for peoples attaining those rights, whether they are economic, social or cultural.

I am arguing as a Welsh internationalist for continuing membership of the British state within UNESCO. I am arguing that because of the distinguished contribution by people from Wales to the work of UNESCO, and because the internationalism that I believe in is represented by that organisation. I hope that we have seen signs of a conversion from the Government.

12.21 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): As a London Member, I find frequently that on Fridays when I attend debates in the Chamber they have as much peck as a headless chicken. This is one of the happy occasions when we have had a lively debate. We have ranged much wider than UNESCO. We have talked about Britain's role within a quickly changing and complex world. I welcome the individual contributions that have been made. They have been thoughtful, and I include the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) in that context.

I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that I am well aware that there are different views within the Government about whether we should stay in UNESCO. We have been in the Chamber for three hours and we have not yet heard anyone who has had the courage —*[Interruption.]*— to bring sensible arguments to the glare of debate and publicity, but no doubt my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) is about to enlighten the House and turn the tide.

After this debate it would be quirky if the Government, in their wisdom, decided that we should come out of UNESCO after all. I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) that we are now in a different international climate following that cosy fireside chat in Geneva. The forces that initiated and set up the operation to withdraw from UNESCO have, in many ways, dissipated in that new climate. I have no illusions about the management of UNESCO in past years. I initiated an Adjournment debate some years ago about some of the wilder aspects of the new world information order, as it was then called. It is a moving target that constantly changes its nomenclature. I agree with the Select Committee report, that it is "inconceivable" that UNESCO would have carried out the reform programme that it has carried out if Britain had not taken the courageous line that it did.

Changing the course of an international organisation with 160 members is not a matter of spinning a rowing boat round on a pond. A better analogy would be trying to get a giant tanker to alter course. Of course, reform will take more than 18 months. It would be foolish for any one of those 160 countries to expect all the points on their shopping list to be met by that world body. That would be arrogant.

I strongly support the Select Committee report. I commend it to the House, and congratulate the Committee on its work. Back Benchers should be guided more by the work that is done in the all-party Select Committees. Unless there are new, overwhelming and compelling arguments against the unanimous conclusion, the average Back Bencher who seeks guidance can do no better than follow the line of the Select Committee's report.

The Select Committee put forward four main arguments as to why we should stay in UNESCO. The first, which has not been sufficiently touched on in our debate, is that staying in is to the benefit of Britain's scientific, educational and cultural institutions. One is entitled to say that that is just what we are talking about – how best to look after those institutions.

On cost grounds, the case is overwhelming for staying in. I welcome my right hon. Friend the Minister back to the Front Bench. I hope that in winding up the debate he will have the courage to say, with all the authority of a Minister, and all the backing of his civil servants, that the Government have done a cost-benefit analysis and believe that it is financially in Britain's interests to stay in. That is the conclusion of everyone who has spoken today. Surely my right hon. Friend can now summon up the courage, with a good lunch inside him, to say those few words.

The Select Committee's second point, which has been a main item in our discussion, is that the Commonwealth and the European Community have been unanimously backing our reform programme inside UNESCO and want us to stay in to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Surely it would be fundamentally wrong to let down both the Commonwealth and the European Community, as well as the reform programme, by taking the easy option and backing out.

The third argument is that the Soviet Union would be able to extend its influence in the Third world if Britain were not there trying to put forward the views of the Western world in the absence of the United States. That is a strong argument. My right hon. Friend said that that might be unfair to other countries that are perfectly capable of putting forward a rational argument. I would have a higher regard for Britain's prestige and influence. We are in a special position through our membership of the Security Council and we have the BBC external services.

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

I could give 1,001 other arguments why Britain is in a special position to lead for the Western world in trying to combat evil influences in the Third world.

Finally, the Select Committee is absolutely right to pick up the word "universality". One of the happy by-products of our debate is that we have had a good dig at Mr. Murdoch. I am well aware that "Auntie Times" will not like the scolding that she has had this morning. I appreciate that "universality" does not appear in *The Sun* editorials, but it seems to be the key word in the debate. There has been bipartisan agreement since the founding of the United Nations that every individual country, however big or small and whatever Government it espouses, should be entitled to take part in the United Nations.

One remembers the rows a few years ago about China. The Americans said that as it was a Communist regime and they did not like it, it must be kept out of the United Nations. This country, under Governments of both parties, always said no to this because China represents a large part of the globe and it should be party to the discussions at world level at the United Nations headquarters.

We shall be embarking on a dangerous course if we start picking and choosing as to which particular United Nations body we shall belong to. If we do a little balance sheet for each one and say that this one is being a bit beastly to us at the moment and perhaps we should come out of it, or that another has not accepted our line on a certain issue and is no good, other countries will follow our example and will pick and choose the United Nations agencies to which they wish to belong. We can all appreciate that if that happens, in due course—we may be talking about a 20-year period—individual sovereign nations might opt out of the United Nations.

If any of my hon. Friends thinks that there is a cosy alternative in a regional group, he would be completely misguided. There is a need for a world body. The world is looking smaller than ever before because of the advances in science. If, at a time when there has been a cosy, fireside chat between the leaders of East and West, we turn our backs on the principle of international organisations, we shall be setting a thoroughly bad example to the world.

The way forward for Britain is not to push nationalism over the edge, or to seek to deny, to thwart, to frustrate and then to opt out, but to participate, to co-operate and to use our special talents for diplomacy inside the framework of a world organisation. In doing so, we shall be helping our cause and at the same time sending ripples throughout the world.

12.32 pm

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): I have great pleasure in following the speech of the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend). He referred to himself as a London Member of Parliament, and I am another one. I can only confirm what he said about the quality of this debate compared with some others that have taken place on Fridays. I have greatly appreciated the many speeches made on both sides of the House, the commitment expressed in them and the quality of information that we have learnt from them.

I shall take up the last conclusion of the Select Committee, to which the hon. Member for Bexleyheath referred — the principle of universality. I begin by underlining the point that he made about the danger of Britain withdrawing from UNESCO because of the effects that it would or could have, whatever the Minister may think. He suggested that our example would not be followed this year by many other resignations from UNESCO. However, it would be a mortal blow to some of the United Nations agencies if it became the practice of nations to come in or go out of such agencies according to whether they happened to like the policies that the agencies or organisations were pursuing at the time.

I underline this point because it is important for us to understand what some of us may have forgotten, which is that 40 years ago we played a major part in the foundation of the United Nations and its agencies and, as has already been noted, in the foundation of UNESCO. For that reason, anybody who has anything to do with United Nations agencies or with the United Nations itself will know that our reputation there, and the importance of what we do there, is far greater than our economic or political influence on the world stage. It is because of the influence that we had on the foundation of UNESCO and other agencies that we are listened to today, and to a greater degree than might have been the case if we were judged solely in terms of our political and economic importance during the 1980s.

The fourth conclusion which the Select Committee identified, the universality of the United Nations, could be seriously undermined as a consequence of a decision to withdraw because we happen to dislike certain actions that go on within UNESCO or because we are critical of the way in which it is administered.

The United Nations organisations and agencies are quite different bodies from the ones which were originally set up, because of the massive increase in the membership of those organisations and agencies. When the United Nations was set up, I suppose one could describe it as a relatively simple job in view of the small number of nations, of which many were concentrated in the West. There are many more member countries today. This has had an important impact on UNESCO, on its ideas, its intellectual content and the differences that can arise as a consequence of the exchange of ideas, theories and the ways of looking at human affairs.

What Mr. M'Bow, the director-general of UNESCO, said at the general conference in Belgrade in 1980 clearly illustrates UNESCO's purpose and its greater importance today than may have been thought possible in the late 1940s when it was founded. He said:

> "UNESCO has to face essentially different challenges all at the same time and must try to combine them all in a view of things in which the unity of man is inseparable from his diversity. It has to bring about co-operation between people who have neither the same historical background nor the same daily concerns. It has to try to make all parties receptive to ways of thinking differing from their own in respect of their cultural, religious or philosophical foundations, while ensuring that none becomes established to the detriment of the others".

This is an important statement; more important in the 1980s with the diversity of membership in the United Nations than perhaps in the 1940s when UNESCO was formed.

The question that should be asked when considering whether an organisation should be abolished or whether we should continue membership of it is: if it did not exist, or if its purposes were not being served, would we need

to invent it? It is far more important now than in the 1940s to have an organisation that is devoted to the purposes for which UNESCO was founded.

The most depressing speech in the debate today was that of the Minister, because he dwelt upon criticisms of the way in which UNESCO operates. He failed to understand the purpose of UNESCO, which is to bring about a clash of ideas, a clash of philosophies, and he failed to recognise the vaue of that type of contact.

There are criticisms of UNESCO's administration. It has been argued, rightly, that international organisations are often not as efficient or as free from criticism as some national ones. The reason is simple — international organisations must employ staff from all of the participating countries, so they tend to be more bureaucratic, move slowly and make decisions with which some countries do not agree.

Plenty of evidence showing the value of UNESCO has been adduced today. I especially appreciated the powerful speech made by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas). One aspect of UNESCO's work relates closely to my quotation of Mr. M'Bow—its vital contribution to developing cultural identity throughout the world and an exchange of ideas.

In 1979, I was privileged to make a ministerial visit to Egypt, where I saw the museums in Cairo and Aswan and the temple of Abu Simnel. The important contribution made by UNESCO to those projects was made clear. What horrified me was how desperately difficult it was for a country such as Egypt, which is relatively poor, to preserve its massive heritage, which belongs rightly to mankind. I was struck by the problem of providing resources to enable a relatively poor country to preserve its cultural heritage and to express its cultural identity.

It is precisely that type of work which UNESCO can do and which the British Council cannot. I found it almost offensive that the Minister should suggest that we give the £6 million or £7 million to the British Council, on the ground that it would be much more organised — that from a Government who have pared down the British Council's budget to the point at which its work is curtailed. The British Council has an important role to play, and I respect its work, but it is quite different from UNESCO. UNESCO can facilitate the development of cultural identity and preserve what might be lost through lack of money.

I am not worried about whether we make a profit out of UNESCO. We should support it in its own right. We will never be completely happy with its decisions—how could we be with an organisation with more than 150 members? The talk, philosophies and ideas with which the Minister disagrees cost only about 3 per cent. of UNESCO's budget, and they will continue anyway. If we withdraw, all that will suffer—all the work that I have described, as well as the scientific, educational and cultural work. The things that the Minister considers damaging would be unaffected.

I am impressed by the great support that has been given to our continued membership of UNESCO. I pray that the Government will take full account of this debate and decide that we should remain in it and exert our influence there. I congratulate the Minister on the progress made by Britain in persuading UNESCO to run itself more efficiently. I hope that he will decide that we should continue to exert that influence, as UNESCO has an important part to play in world affairs.

12.45 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I echo the congratulations and comments made by hon. Members on both sides on the work of my right hon. Friend the Minister during the past year. He has had a rough year regarding many international issues, and the dedication with which he has approached those tasks has won admiration on all sides.

Although the debate is about the Foreign Affairs Select Committee report, which I wholeheartedly support, I wish to broaden it a little. Many people and organisations have had a great deal to say, and they are not the types who are easily led or misled, who make off-the-cuff judgments, or who are likely to be easily prejudiced, and they are certainly not ignorant about the subject.

I have the honour to be the only hon. Member who is a member of the United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO. Apart from me, it is a body of distinguished people from all walks of life. They have allowed me to learn about the broader impact of UNESCO's work on our scientific and cultural community. The body has had some constitutional problems because, unlike most national commissions — every member of UNESCO has a national commission — our chairman is the Minister responsible for Government policy on UNESCO. However, that has not stopped the commission from making a lively contribution to discussions and from having a lively dialogue with my right hon. Friend. The national commission will have other opportunities to talk directly to my right hon. Friend, as he said in his speech.

As a member of the Select Committee on Education Science and Arts, I know that during the past year hardly a witness has appeared before us who has not been questioned, where at all relevant, about his or her attitude, or the attitude of the body he or she represents, to Britain's possible withdrawal from UNESCO. They have included university vice chancellors, people from polytechnics, leading scientists and members of research councils, and they have been unanimous in their support for our continued membership, even if it would not make much difference to their particular subject. They have their finger on the pulse of our scientific and cultural community.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Barnett) and I have the honour to be co-chairmen of the Council for Education in the Commonwealth. He will agree that at every meeting considerable support has been expressed for our continued membership of UNESCO. The members of that committee include high commissions, university vice chancellors, the Department of Education and Science and many others from all over the world, and there is no doubt about their support for our continued membership.

Today we have heard of the Royal Society's support for continued membership, and of the cri de coeur from the British Council that we should remain in UNESCO. During the past few years the British Council has suffered greatly, but it continues to expand on a highly cost-efficient basis wherever it can conceivably do so, and in some unlikely coalitions, — for example, even with Suntory whisky in Japan. That way it expands its English language teaching there.

At present it is popular to be rude about the United Nations. Last month, when I was at the United Nations in New York, I talked to a large cross-section of people from many of the agencies. There is no doubt about their regard for Britain, its status and influence in international affairs.

[Mr. Robert Key]

On my visit I learnt a great deal. I learnt that Britain's crucial role in the United Nations is that of interlocutor between the group of 77—now a far larger group—that represents the less developed countries, and the rich OECD countries. Those who fail to appreciate that role fundamentally misunderstand our function in the United Nations. We are the bridge for those who wish to change the world to their advantage but who cannot do so without the rich members of the OECD. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) referred to this in his eloquent speech. Often, it falls to Britain to maintain the difficult balance and consensus that is necessary if we are to catch the spirit of the trend towards constructive dialogue between the great nations, as we saw in Geneva this week.

I pay tribute to the "Keep Britain in UNESCO" campaign. Those campaigners are not normally quick to form political pressure groups. They have come together out of deep conviction, because they found the ignorance and prejudice in the UNESCO debate unacceptable. They have done much to educate a wide cross-section of people, not least hon. Members who have their briefing material, which answers many of the questions that have been raised.

There is no doubt that mismanagement has occurred. That has been discussed in depth. However, if mismanagement has been such a strong feature of our criticism of UNESCO, why did Britain vote to give Mr. M'Bow a second term of six years? We did not criticise him then for any of the failures for which we criticise him now.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Part of the difficulty of voting in UNESCO arises from its consensus and composition. If we had voted against Mr. M'Bow on that occasion, we would have mustered about six votes and the rest would have been in favour. We would have looked rather stupid.

Mr. Key: My hon. Friend is correct about consensus, but our withdrawal from UNESCO would surely mean that we would have no influence on the choice of Mr. M'Bow's successor.

Much comment has been made about the centralisation in Paris. There has been a considerable move towards the decentralisation of UNESCO, especially towards the Pacific and Asia. I must also point out that 83 per cent. of the money is now spent outside Paris.

Of all the major countries that are members of UNESCO, why is Britain alone not represented at ambassadorial level? Britain has a highly efficient, proficient and hard-working staff, but it is strange that we should criticise UNESCO and expect it to achieve so much at our behest when we do not have ambassadorial representation in Paris.

I shall not comment at length on the financial arguments, but I am unconvinced that we would lose financially if we withdrew. I suspect that the arguments are inconclusive, but if we withdraw we cannot expect future contracts to come our way.

The political consequences of withdrawal are far more important. We have heard arguments from several hon. Members that suggest that when the pendulum swings too far in a political debate, we should jump off. That is a completely new philosophy of pendulum-swinging in our political lives. We talk about pendulums swinging back, but the notion that we should jump off when the pendulum reaches the far point is new. Does it imply that we should have abandoned the coal industry when it swung so far in a way that the Government found undesirable? Does the new philosophy suggest that we should abandon the city of Liverpool because it has swung so far in one political direction, and we should forget that it is there? I reject that concept.

We should also remember that Britain has a high stature in UNESCO, as it does in the United Nations. We should not belittle or forget that. If we left, we could never rejoin on the same terms or with the same status and influence as we have now. Furthermore, no under-developed country will pull out of UNESCO if we do. Let us not kid ourselves about that. If we pull out, it will be a unilateral gesture which will undoubtedly result in a considerable increase in the influence of the Soviet Union, which will step in to fill the vacuum left by the departure of Britain and the United States.

We are talking about a battle for hearts and minds. The Minister said that some mischief-230making might be involved, but I do not believe that we should leave UNESCO because of mischief-making. Furthermore, there is nothing imponderable in this, as was suggested earlier. I remind my right hon. Friend the Minister, who talked about the good sense of the Commonwealth, that the Commonwealth believes unanimously that Britain should stay in.

I was a little alarmed to hear some hon. Members say that if we pull out of UNESCO more money might be available for the British Council and for the overseas service of the BBC. That would be nice, but I hope that argument does not go to its logical conclusion—that the BBC and the British Council can expect no more funds unless we leave UNESCO. That is the dangerous extension of the argument.

It would be unprecedented for the United Kingdom to leave an international organisation, such as UNESCO, on grounds of objection to one official and his faults, or because we are not getting our way in sufficiently great measure. I echo the recurring theme of the debate: where is our internationalism at a time when we have a new climate in world affairs? The North-South dialogue has improved to a position we have never before seen, as has the East-West dialogue.

The ideal of UNESCO is still alive, and I beg the Government to continue Britain's role as a physician, not as an undertaker.

12.57 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is remarkable that in a debate about Britain's possible withdrawal from UNESCO, so far—unfortunately, I missed the opening speeches—no hon. Member has seriously called for Britain to withdraw from UNESCO or from any other United Nations organisation. That of itself is significant, but what is also significant is that, despite the regular denigration of UNESCO and other United Nation's organisations in the British popular press, and by successive Ministers during the past few years, there is enormous support for the principle of staying in UNESCO. Many of those who have spoken about it to me realise that if we withdrew it would be the beginning of our withdrawal from many other international organisations. We would be saying, "Stop the world, we want to get off".

The basis of the debate is not the finances or the administrative arrangements of UNESCO, but the power of the far Right in the United States, which wishes to return to the isolationism of the 1920s and 1930s. Those who tried to destroy the League of Nations are now applying similar pressure in the United States. Some people in America are worried that its withdrawal from UNESCO is a signal to withdraw from other international organisations and agencies.

With other hon. Members, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the constitution of UNESCO as agreed in London in 1945. I do not quarrel with it except for its continual references to the "affairs of men", "mankind", and "the dignity of men". Nowhere does it mention the inequality of women. I hope that when the Minister replies he will tell us that he proposes to table amendments to the language used in UNESCO's constitution and publications.

The constitution of UNESCO, which was issued just after the end of the second world war, contains two important statements. It says:

"That a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind. For these reasons the States Parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all, in the unrestricted pursuit of objective truth and in the free exchange of ideas and knowledge, are agreed and determined to develop and to increase the means of communication between their peoples and to employ these means for the purposes of mutual understanding and a truer and more perfect knowledge of each other's lives."

In the letter which the Minister for Overseas Development wrote to the director-general of UNESCO on 2 April 1984 he said:

"At the same time, within this perspective"—

the Minister is referring to the perspective of British membership of UNESCO—

"we believe firmly that these basic ideas and principles are as valid today as they were when they were drawn up here nearly 40 years ago."

In response to the Government's proposals for changes in UNESCO, Mr. M'Bow recommended that Britain should become a member of the budget committee.

Is it the UNESCO budget that is worrying the Government, or is this a political decision? I have studied the very interesting report on United Kingdom membership of UNESCO by the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. Britain's contribution to UNESCO is tiny. It is less than the total expenditure of an average sized district council. Table II of the Select Committee's report shows that Britain has made a profit out of membership of UNESCO. I take no pride whatsoever in that fact. As one of the top 10 wealthiest countries in the world, we should contribute more, not less, to UNESCO's work, particularly towards its literacy programme.

There have been many unfortunate statements. It is said that the problem with UNESCO is Mr. M'Bow's character, that debates are conducted by the poorest and most downtrodden people in the world, and that all of the money is being spent in Paris on high living and fast cars. I suggest that hon. Members should consider how NATO treats its senior staff and how much they are paid.

A recent UNESCO study showed that

"during the first eighteen months of 1984-85 period . . . the total expenditure incurred — 82·6 per cent. — was used to finance activities carried out away from headquarters. 42·5 per cent. was accounted for by programme appropriations managed by, and consequently disbursed from Headquarters, but earmarked for activities carried out in the field. 27·7 per cent. was accounted for by activities carried out by regional offices and centres."

That has to be set alongside disgraceful newspaper articles about the way in which UNESCO manages its affairs and spends its money. For the most part, its money is spent on literacy and other similar programmes.

Many people prefer not to recognise that 15 million people have learnt to read and write because of UNESCO's work and that they now come within the orbit of normal communications. They disregard also the 30,000 teachers who were trained in one year, the monuments that have been saved, the establishment of educational programmes, the development of cultural institutes and the preservation of many cultures that were under threat from tourism and Western domination. Instead, they choose to criticise UNESCO for doing what it is supposed to do.

UNESCO was set up in 1945 with a relatively small membership, drawn largely from the wealthier, white Western nations. The majority of UNESCO's membership now represents a world population that is neither white nor wealthy. It is black and poor. This is considered to be a reason for Britain withdrawing from UNESCO.

What are the different expectations of those who go to UNESCO's negotiating tables and debating chambers? Many of those national representatives represent desperately poor countries formed of many terribly unhealthy people. They harbour the hope that together, internationally, people can conquer illiteracy and disease and overcome the ignorance that brings about those tragedies in the first place. Should we withdraw from an organisation that is trying to overcome illiteracy and promote scientific research? From among all the documents, one remark that stuck in my mind was that which pointed out that the incidence of earthquakes is no respecter of international boundaries. That is why, internationally, we must do everything possible to avoid the horrors of earthquakes.

Many of those who are opposed to UNESCO hold their view because of statements that have been made about the consequences of colonialism or neo-colonialism and about the way in which the world's information systems are dominated by a small number of people. It remains true that it is easier to fly from one part of Africa to another via London or Paris than it is to fly direct. Many of the world's information systems are dominated by Western news agencies.

Is it so wrong that UNESCO should point out the way in which international news reporting continually denigrates the Third world and poorer countries? Consider the media coverage of the major elections that have taken place in the world in recent years, and I am not referring to the Brecon and Radnor by-election. The election for the President of the United States received saturation coverage from the beginning of the first insignificant straw poll of six farmers in Iowa for the Democratic nomination, right through to the final result, although that was reasonably predictable because the media had been telling the voters for many months beforehand how to vote.

Compare that detailed reporting of the political scene in America with the lack of detail in reporting the elections in a much larger country. I refer to the perhaps more significant campaign in India last year. There are more

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

BBC correspondents in the United States than there are in India, and more BBC interests in America than in the whole of Africa.

That is the information domination about which UNESCO complained. There are more agents working for UPI, Reuter, the Press Association and other news outlets in America than in many Third world countries. That information imbalance was the subject of the UNESCO proposals.

Let us not forget that UNESCO's work extends into many other spheres, including libraries and systems for extending knowledge. I recently received a report of a Third world conference in Penang, in Malaysia, which was held in November of last year, as a result of which a book has been published. That publication states in its proposals on communications and the mass media:

"The right of people to obtain information, especially information relating to the crucial aspects of their livelihood and basic requirements, should be recognised by governments as part of the right of expression. Governments should ensure that adequate and accurate information is available . . . . The overwhelming control of the international news media by a few agencies in the industrialised countries should be reduced and critical coverage of development issues increased. The basic principles of the New International Information Order should therefore be supported."

Many of those who criticise the information order say that it is a form of censorship by the Third world of the First world. I suggest that the First world has nothing to worry about, considering the overwhelming power that already exists in that sector.

It is significant that the International Organisation of Journalists at the Sofia conference declared that that organisation did not believe in any sense in trying to impose censorship; rather, that it believed the opposite and was trying to promote the free flow of information around the world.

I hope that the Government will think again and will not proceed to withdraw from UNESCO. If they do, it is unlikely that the Conservatives will take us back in, although we can be certain that the next Labour Government will re-establish our membership at the earliest opportunity.

If we were to withdraw, we should be turning our backs on two-thirds of the world's population and on an organisation that is endeavouring to overcome the poverty and illiteracy that exist in the world. That is what gets up the nose of the far Right in the United States and, unfortunately, the puppets that it has in this country in the media, and on some of the Conservative Benches, although they have not so far voiced their feelings.

I represent an area of London that has people from almost every country in the world, from all sorts of diverse backgrounds. They believe in internationalism, as I do, and they view the possibility of Britain withdrawing from UNESCO with some degree of horror. They would see it as the British Government turning their back on a very important organisation. I hope that the Government will not go ahead with this foolish move, will reaffirm our membership of UNESCO, and will also consider increasing our contribution.

1.10 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I have learnt several lessons from being in this House. One is that the best speeches and debates are often on Fridays when the House is fairly empty. Another is that whenever the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) hurries back into the Chamber to listen to a colleague, that speaker is likely to be an extreme Left-winger who will attack the United States and everyone who takes a different view from himself as being a Right-wing puppet of some Fascist regime; who will attack NATO, the EEC and every other international organisation which is contrary to the internationalism of the far Left; and who will defend the indefensible. As I agree with the practical conclusion of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), that places me in a position of great embarrassment.

I have also learnt that the number of advocates for a cause in a debate on Friday is not necessarily representative of the true number of advocates for that cause in the House at large on a day when more hon. Members can be present. So far, every hon. Member has spoken in favour of remaining in UNESCO. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) takes a different view. But there is a substantial amount of feeling in the country—it has been reflected in leading articles in the responsible national newspapers—for getting out and staying out of UNESCO.

Mr. Foulkes: Surely the hon. and learned Gentleman will concede that it was open to any of the 650 hon. Members of the House to come here today and express that point of view strongly. Therefore, the debate should be taken as representative, because it represents those with knowledge and interest who are prepared to argue the case. That applies equally to Monday to Thursday as to Friday.

Mr. Lawrence: The hon. Gentleman speaks at the head of the serried ranks of empty Labour Benches representing those who favour staying in UNESCO. He knows as well as I do that constituency activities are traditionally reserved for Friday, and that many of those who would speak most strongly on one side or the other cannot be here. There are members of the Select Committee who feel very strongly, and who took part in intensive deliberations on the question, but cannot be here. That is a fact of life. Therefore, one should not conclude that the House is overwhelmingly in favour of staying in UNESCO, and that only a handful of pitiful voices would dare to raise themselves against the overwhelming mass. I am sure that if my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, his voice will be far from pitiful, even though it may be a lone voice.

I have also learnt some lessons that are particularly relevant to the subject of UNESCO. First, there are very few black and white issues in the world that concern us as politicians; most of them are grey. UNESCO is neither all good nor all bad. Secondly, institutions for good are far easier to destroy than to create. It would be far easier to destroy UNESCO, which has done more good than harm, than to create a better alternative. Staying in UNESCO is one option for the money we spend. Those resources could perhaps go to other institutions and organisations which could benefit international society just as much.

Another lesson is that it is often better to stay with institutions which are predominantly for good but which are going wrong to try to improve them rather than, in a fit of anger, to stamp out and help destroy them. I agree with my colleagues on the Select Committee on Foreign

Affairs that we should stay in UNESCO, at least to give it time to see whether the reforms can be brought to fulfilment.

I shall not weary the House with a repeat of the list of the scientific and cultural good works carried out by UNESCO. Nor shall I repeat the reasons why we should stay in that organisation, because those reasons have been well explained in the debate. Perhaps the best speech deploying those reasons — if I may say so without offending those hon. Members still present—was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), who spoke with great authority on a matter which concerns him deeply. If there was one speech today that ought to be heard and read by the public it was that of my right hon. Friend.

An account of the achievements of and reasons for remaining in UNESCO can be found also in the excellent report of the Select Committee, in which I played a small part. Reports are now circulating about the results of the Sofia meeting and the proposed 117 reforms — principally the control promised for the budget. But we should not necessarily be carried away by a commitment to reforms until those reforms are made operative. It is difficult for UNESCO to guarantee that any of the conclusions reached in Sofia will be effective. If they are not effective, I hope that hon. Members who favour staying in UNESCO, at least for the time being, will be prepared to speak up for our withdrawal, because there is often a gap between what is promised and what is fulfilled.

Mr. Lester: I have listened to my hon. and learned Friend's remarks with great care and applaud all that he said, in particular his remarks about the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that the formation of a special committee with 18 members, carrying on from the temporary committee which was initially set up to examine the reforms, is a statement of faith that the rest of UNESCO's members agree that reforms are needed and are prepared to continue to work to ensure that reforms take place?

Mr. Lawrence: I am in favour of good intentions, but we must look for the fulfilment of those intentions. We expect UNESCO to honour its commitments and to see that they are fulfilled. If UNESCO does not do that, it will suffer. That must be the position of hon. Members and we should support the line taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister.

I have several serious worries about UNESCO. Everyone today has said how good and wonderful UNESCO is, how splendid its purposes are and how ill-advised anybody would be to dwell upon its criticisms. There has been scant reference to the drawbacks of UNESCO from Britain's point of view.

I should like those in high places in UNESCO to know that some of us are not much impressed by the Sofia reforms, however much may be promised administratively or procedurally. Some—perhaps many—of us are far from certain that it can be in Britain's interest to support and subsidise an organisation which gets most of its money from the Soviet Union, which had 12 employees expelled from France in 1983 because they were KGB operators and which has never raised a finger to help the cultural and religious rights and freedoms of Jews in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Foulkes: Surely the hon. and learned Gentleman agrees that the only reason why the Soviet Union pays the largest contribution is because the previous largest contributor, the United States, has withdrawn. If the United States rejoins, it will again be the largest contributor.

Mr. Lawrence: The United States will not necessarily rejoin because we decide to leave or stay. The Soviet Union provides the money that pays the piper and, therefore, it is likely to call the tune.

Even when the United States was a member, there was still Soviet bias in the organisation. As I said, 12 UNESCO employees were expelled from France in 1983 because they were KGB operators. Those who work in UNESCO know how many Marxist sympathisers there are in important positions in the organisation. If the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is not impressed by such matters, I hope that he will read the Select Committee's report. More than once I put to embarrassed officials the point that, although the organisation's articles make it clear that it exists for cultural and educative freedom, it had never lifted a finger to ensure that the Soviet Union, one of its principal paymasters, did anything about the repression of the educational and cultural rights of its people who did not share its atheism. It is an embarrasing matter for UNESCO officials and supporters and the answers were always embarrassing. It is a good example of the effect of the Soviet Union's power on UNESCO.

The UNESCO officials who read the report of our debate should not think that we are all uncritical of a hopelessly inefficient—if not corrupt, but I do not press the corruption — management of UNESCO's financial affairs. We are worried that an overwhelmingly high proportion of resources are spent on the organisation's Paris headquarters, that there are clear indications of the past misuse of funds, of evidence of intimidation of critics, of patronage being used for political purposes and of power being concentrated in the hands of one man who it is difficult to remove. In addition to all that, UNESCO has not even followed its own rules on employment and cultural freedom.

We have to ask whether such an organisation should be supported by the British taxpayer. The Select Committee was not stupid. It realised that nearly all the witnesses who appeared before it had an interest in our staying in UNESCO. Even those who might have been tempted to be more critical than they were had an interest, because if Britain does not pull out they have to stay there and live with the organisation and try to improve it. They cannot guarantee that that will happen if they are seen publicly to stand up, criticise and attack.

Our recommendation was that the decision whether to stay in should be dependent upon what was achieved at Sofia, so we can look at some of those Sofia achievements and take a harder look at UNESCO to see whether we are yet satisfied that it is a completely desirable organisation.

To start with, is it not wholly undesirable that money should be given to nationalist and terrorist organisations? My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, in a passage of breathtaking naivity, seemed to believe that the money would be used to educate the PLO into the democratic anti-terrorist principles that we follow in the West. It is not intended for that purpose, or, even if it were, it would not be used for that purpose. It would

[Mr. Lawrence]

be used, would it not, to educate the less terrorist into becoming more terrorist and the less democratic into becoming even less democratic, because that is the way of the world? The trouble with giving money to terrorist organisations is that the money may be used to help, not hinder, the killing process. That is why any organisation, even when it is warned that it should not do so, which gives money to such bodies is heaping upon itself a massive amount of criticism from right-thinking members of Western society.

It was unacceptable that press freedom should be restricted by the new world information and communication order which licensed journalists and stopped them from criticising Communists and Third world Governments. I am not sure how dead that order is. The fact that it was an important part of UNESCO's policy gives me no reason to be convinced that such an activity is never likely to happen in future. I hope that it will not, but it is one of the matters that we shall be watching closely.

It is unacceptable that the Soviet view of human rights should be advanced by UNESCO while Western principles of individual freedom should be diminished. The Soviet Union has no comprehension of individual freedom, because the philosophy of the state is that the state is all powerful and the individual must be subject to it. There is never a meeting of minds between us and the USSR on this. I have been actively engaged on this matter for the past two or three years. There never seems to be a meeting of minds or an understanding about what is meant by human rights between us and the Soviets. To the Soviets, human rights are a fantasy of the bourgeois West. It is a meaningless concept. Individual freedom is irrelevant. Any organisation which continues to push that view of individual freedom and human rights will not follow a policy which is acceptable to the West.

It is unacceptable that money should be spent on so-called peace and disarmament programmes by an educational and cultural organisation. Certainly, if peace means what everyone in the West means by peace, then it would be a jolly good idea if some organisations found more money for it, but we know, do we not, that the Soviet view of peace and of disarmament programmes is not shared by us in the West? That is another ground for people in this country thinking that giving money to UNESCO is completely unjustified. Money should be given for religious and cultural freedom, but not for peace and disarmament programmes.

People in high places in UNESCO may read today's proceedings and be impressed by the support being given to UNESCO. They should not be under any illusion that we are all happy with the organisation, that we all admire the skills of the director-general and that we are all delighted with the reforms that have been achieved at Sofia. They should not be misled into believing that UNESCO can continue in its old way of kicking the West, democracy, the rule of law, civil liberties and human rights and attacking our interests indefinitely, because we shall not put up with that for much longer.

Many people in Britain are asking why we should continue as a member of UNESCO, whether subsidising it or not. As a member of the Select Committee, I was persuaded that we have more to gain financially by being a member than we have to lose. But that is not the only consideration. We should not go on supporting an organisation which, by its political activities, is no friend of Britain and the West. That is a serious and important point of view. It will require a response from us, as the representatives of the people, to the people's wishes. Pressure will be put upon us to withdraw and to support our best friends, not our worst friends. It will be said that we should spend our resources and contributions in ways that will advance, not diminish, the interests of the West.

We should warn those who run UNESCO that the threads that bind Britain to UNESCO are very thin and are not growing thicker. There is a limit to the extent to which we can go on arguing that British influence that is not manifestly successful is more important than British influence that may be more successful if directed elsewhere. If those in positions of power in UNESCO have any other ideas, they should remember that our money can be spent elsewhere and that British influence can be well directed elsewhere. The Commonwealth unanimously wants Britain to stay in because withdrawal might precipitate the collapse of UNESCO and others would follow our example. British cultural and scientific brains can find a far more welcoming and responsive home in other parts of the world and in other international activities any time they wish to go.

I should like those who are in positions of responsibility and power in UNESCO to remember that many of us do not like the idea that Britain is still a member. We are giving UNESCO one more chance to pull its socks up and show a better and more friendly face to those of us in the West who care deeply about the development of the Third world.

1.33 pm

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): I feel rather like a coxswain sitting in front of a rowing eight, outnumbered and daunted by the sheer size of the oarsmen and therefore respectful of their brawn. However, I am confident that being the only one looking in the right direction, I may steer them in the way that I shall attempt to go in my speech.

It is with great sadness that I speak in favour of withdrawal from UNESCO, not with anger. Over many years, before coming to the House, I worked closely with international lending agencies and United Nations organisations, and on many occasions have visited the International Labour Office and the United Nations Development Programme and worked alongside some of the programmes emanating from the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation. I am, therefore, instinctively and strongly supportive of the United Nations family. I am equally conscious of the importance of multilateral organisations and — not nationalistically inspired, as has been said of those who are opposed to our future membership—I am conscious of the importance of bilateral programmes. However, I recognise the importance of multilateral programmes. Equally, I have the highest respect for both the competence of many of the staff and the effectiveness of the organisations sustained by many of the United Nations bodies with which I have worked.

However, I do not find it satisfactory to hear from many hon. Members that opposition by people such as myself is based specifically on some Right-wing ideology or political principle. That is not so. It would be absurd if it were. After all, in many United Nations bodies there are

policies, indeed programmes, with which one may strongly disagree ideologically. I am not arguing for a minute that we should leave all United Nations organisations. I happen not to like many of the policies that are being implemented by UNESCO in its programmes, but that is not the major reason why I advocate that we should terminate our membership.

I happen to dislike much of what the Labour party offers, but that does not mean that I wish to see the end of constitutional democracy or to run away from this country. Remarkably, there are even some things that I quite like about the Labour party, not least the ability of some of the general management committees to send to the House eloquent speakers, many of whom we have heard speaking from the heart on this subject, and from the position that I share—being a firm protagonist of the need for strong British representation overseas and support for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in all aspects of its vote, not just the diplomatic service but the vital BBC overseas service, the British Council and our aid programme.

I had no difference with Labour Members when last year we voted on the FCO budget. I abstained with other colleagues because I felt strongly that it was important to see an increase in real terms for our representation overseas. Equally, I do not believe that it would be right to pay too much attention to those who argue that people who oppose our continued membership of UNESCO do so on the basis of one official—Mr. M'Bow.

I do not for a minute believe that I have been in any way influenced—I say that in all sincerity—in my views on future membership of UNESCO by Mr. M'Bow. He is an eloquent individual and spoke at length on Monday to hon. Members who took the opportunity to go and listen to him. Although I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) that Mr. M'Bow's knowledge of the details of UNESCO was sadly lacking, it would be wrong, foolish and blind to decide a matter of this importance purely on the basis of the character of one individual, even if he is the director-general of that organisation. That is all the more relevant when one remembers that he has only one and a half years left in office. It is sad and in some ways shocking, giving due regard to the intellectual level that one hopes to hear from hon. Members when they resort to such an argument, that they use the political Right-wing or personality arguments.

My concerns are much more fundamental about the reforms. Everyone argues—and I agree—that if one does not like the look of an organisation, one tries to reform it from within. That must be the right step to take. As much effort, time and support should go into internal reforms and at the end of the day the result should be changes that work in the interests of the organisation and therefore our continued membership. When the issue was raised in the House on 12 November last year, I asked the Minister:

"does my right hon. Friend agree that the criterion for UNESCO aid disbursements should be effective distribution to recipients and that conditions for improved performance should be tied to a declared intention to withdraw, to be implemented if, and only if, such improvements are not forthcoming by the end of next year?—[*Official Report*, 12 November 1984; Vol. 67, c. 412.]

The problems that UNESCO faced this time last year, which led to reforms and to the withdrawal of the United States, were clearly set out by the United States general accounting office audits. I am not quoting a Heritage Foundation assessment, be it objective or subjective. I am looking at the reasons that led to the American withdrawal and the response that we initiated as a result to see whether that response has been effective. If it has not been, is it possible that the money could go elsewhere and be equally well, or better, spent or not spent? This is at the heart of today's debate. The debate is not about the principle of the need to belong to international bodies. What has been said today may lead us to think that universality is the only principle at stake. To me, the critical issue is whether the reforms have been implemented to such an extent, and are heading in the right direction, to give me the confidence to believe that we should remain a member of UNESCO.

Mr. Lester: Does my hon. Friend agree, although it might not be paramount in his mind, that if we left UNESCO, it would break the principle of universality which we have maintained since the end of the war? We have always been members of all the major international authorities in which we have been able to exert an influence.

Mr. Moynihan: I agree that such a withdrawal would break the principle of universality with the United Nations and its organisation. However, I do not believe that the principle of universality should provide carte blanche as a cover under which any other reforms or desires for change can be hidden. I am singularly against that.

In other words, there is no divine right about universality. There is a great deal of importance behind it, and it is of relevance to our relations with the Commonwealth, other Western countries and other members of the United Nations. However, universality is not a divine right, and people are in danger of using it too easily as a blanket cover under which to hide the more fundamental points of whether our money and presence in the organisation are valuable, or whether there are better ways to pursue the important and fundamental objectives that UNESCO aims to achieve.

I support those fundamental objectives, and I am delighted that as objectives they are echoed by the British Council which, as hon. Members will no doubt recall, was established purely to promote cultural, educational and technical co-operation between Britain and other countries. Its objectives do not just run in parallel with, but overlap some of, the programmes of work undertakesn by UNESCO. The British Council undertakes some sub-contractual work on behalf of UNESCO.

I return to the point that was at the centre of the debate this time last year. We knew from the American general accounting office audit that the concentration in the Paris headquarters was not just a matter of fact that we were criticising, but was a growing problem. Many people were moving from the field to the headquarters. Ten years ago, UNESCO staff were split evenly between headquarters and the field, but today over 70 per cent. are in headquarters — the proportion of people working in Third world countries has declined considerably.

There was a comparative decline in professional staff, and we have often heard about the importance of UNESCO as an intellectual body for discussing matters, and not just as a development organisation. Ten years before American withdrawal, the UNESCO staff were divided 50:50 between professional staff and support staff—in other

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words, general service personnel. Today, the ratio is 40:60, and is therefore moving in the opposite direction to that which we should like to see.

There has also been an increasing preference for short, fixed-term but renewable contracts over permanent employment. By last year, 90 per cent. of the professional staff were on contracts running between two to three years. I am a firm believer that in an organisation such as this, just as in research in higher education here, we too often look to the short-term posts that nothing like adequately fill the need for long-term research.

With this method of recruiting staff, UNESCO has established a second, informal system which enables the director-general to bypass the regulations concerning qualifications and procedures. This involves the extensive hiring of temporary or casual employees. UNESCO rules state that such appointments should be made only exceptionally, and should not exceed three months for professionals and one month for general service personnel. As the audit identified, the provisions are routinely circumvented to the disadvantage of UNESCO. Some 2,363 temporary employees who work the equivalent of 695 staff years were identified.

This is a problem of inter-personnel management which we must sort out to ensure that the operation of a budget the size of a university's is effective. There were long delays in filling vacant posts. In December 1983 — before the audit was written — 226 regular professional posts had been vacant for an average of 18 months. In other United Nations agencies, it is a rule that if a post is left unfilled for a long period, it is assumed that it is no longer needed and hence should be abolished. I am painting a picture of a personnel system which is unacceptable and which requires radical reform and radical restructuring. Such reforms were taken on board in some of the proposal forms made by the Government at the beginning of this year.

There is no more important function in the United Nations than that of programme planning — the evaluation and co-ordination of planning. Project evaluation is important to any international lending agency. One of the problems that we face with the World Bank is that the project cycle is taking progressively longer to implement. We must have reforms to implement and appraise projects.

In UNESCO programme planning, evaluation and co-ordination is of vital importance. Yet it is still the case that, 40 years on, UNESCO has just begun to consider an effective system of evaluation. The effectiveness of its programme activities will require co-ordination to avoid the duplication that has marred UNESCO's history. We are not talking about five or 10 duplicated projects out of every 100. When the appraisal was done, there were 186 major programmes. I am talking not about small desk office jobs but about major programmes. Of those 186 programmes, 57 duplicated activities. That is a large proportion of the programmes which UNESCO implements.

UNESCO programme planning routinely fails to indentify what the organisation will provide when it completes its activity and who will benefit. It is vital that a project should not just be laid aside the moment that the project period is over. The continuing work in so much of these activities is vital. This continuing work was highlighted by the all-party group on overseas development with regard to agricultural projects in Africa. There is no point implementing a project and then leaving it. These projects are of long-term relevance to Third world development, specifically on the scientific side.

We also hear, and quite rightly, about the importance of monitoring. The follow-up work is important, but monitoring is lax within UNESCO. There is no systematic control over programme development. I have had an opportunity, as have other hon. Members, to speak to some eminent members of UNESCO who I understand are with us today, although I cannot see them. As they are with us and have taken the time to be with us this week, it is interesting that they have failed to answer the point about UNESCO still being a long way from a system that evaluates programme activity effectively.

Mr. Lester: I have listened carefully to my hon. Friend's thesis. I accept the validity of what he has said, but he is not arguing the key point, which is whether the United States's departure and our possible departure from UNESCO is likely to reverse the trend that he has described. The essence of my hon. Friend's case is that UNESCO is going the wrong way. It has just started to go the right way, so this must be the worst possible time to leave. My hon. Friend and I want the same thing but disagree about the means of achieving it.

Mr. Moynihan: It will come as no surprise to my hon. Friend that the thrust of my argument is about to be developed. Several hon. Members are smiling because I have already taken some time. Many others feel as strongly as I do that we should leave UNESCO but they cannot be with us because of constituency commitments.

I do not believe that the thrust behind the reforms so far can be carried on with or without us. I disagree with the assessment of the temporary committee advanced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South. It is regrettable that the temporary committee has been disbanded in favour of the special committee, as it had far more teeth and was much closer to the initial reforms and monitored them effectively. It disagreed with many, reviewed others and accepted some. Moreover, it put a timetable on reforms and identified the people who would be responsible for implementing them. UNESCO had a body to implement reforms, but out it went and in came the special committtee with completely different personnel and without responsibility to set out how reforms should be effected.

I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) who argued that the change is beneficial. I contend that it is regressive. A comparison can be drawn between those committees and aid for Africa. We will experience aid fatigue, although the problems in Africa will be as great next year as they are this year. We are getting reform fatigue. People close to UNESCO, not least the Australians, are getting tired of us whingeing poms, as we are indelicately described. If we hang the noose around UNESCO's neck for another year, we shall not get the same positive response as we got this year. We shall get only dissatisfaction.

Mr. Foulkes: May I confirm what the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) said? Far from the committee of 18 being less powerful, it is more powerful. The hon. Gentleman should admit that his information is out of date. Following Sofia, a timetable with specific implementation

targets has been adopted. It includes decentralisation, evaluation, programme implementation and financial and budgetary measures. All of that has been taken account of. The hon. Gentleman's brief must be out of date.

Mr. Moynihan: My brief is far from out of date. It was collated as recently as yesterday evening from experts, whom the hon. Gentleman also met, and was written up this morning. It could not be more up to date than that.

Many of the reforms, to which the hon. Gentleman has alluded, tend to be mostly procedural. I regret that many hon. Members have not criticised the nature of the procedural reforms. Now, there are dates for the implementation of marking UNESCO programmes "urgent" or "not so urgent". Along with *The Economist*, I consider that to be a rough and ready device which is unlikely to bring UNESCO's sprawling activities under the control that its big financial contributors should demand.

My argument is based on cost-benefit analysis, not cost analysis. We should look to what our membership can achieve, and whether the right sort of programmes are implemented in the right direction for the limited money dispersed through an organisation such as UNESCO. I believe strongly that we are not getting value for money. I would not advocate my case as vociferously and strongly as I have unless I felt that there was a better way of spending the £5 million or of ensuring that many of the valuable programmes and principles of UNESCO continue through other bodies. From what I have heard this morning, I know that some hon. Members will scream at my suggestion.

The Minister's comments were remarkably heartening. He alluded specifically to the money going to the British Council, and said that, even within the overall aid budget, there was considerable opportunity for the money. That is obviously crucial to the final position. Having heard all the speeches this morning, I do not believe that the £5 million will go back to the Treasury. It will be deeply regretted if it does, and time will tell. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) may well smile, but I am certain that he is wrong. I am confident from the Minister's words that the hon. Member is definitely wrong.

I should like to see two particular programmes developed. Major spin-offs are available to the technical co-operation training programme. Professor Fage's evidence to the Select Committee has already been quoted, but it can equally well be quoted for the outstanding importance of the British Council's work relating to UNESCO activities. He said:

"Our language, our ideals, our influence all spread as a result. I do not think that we should lightly shut ourselves off from this ... olished international mechanism for winning friends and advancing our interests."

I have travelled the world seeing British Council offices, and exactly the same applies to the work that it does so effectively around the world. The British Council not only works effectively but spends far less of our limited budget on administering the programmes. Even the figures quoted by the friends of UNESCO are nowhere near the efficiency of the British Council.

Mr. Tom Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Moynihan: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. Another hon. Member wishes to speak in about two minutes, and I am coming to the end of my speech.

The British Council spends only 9 per cent. of every £100 on administering the United Nations programme. That covers much the same work that is being done and must be done to effect its outstanding work on the technical co-operation training programme. The work includes the selection of candidates overseas to ODA criteria, placing them in British institutions, briefing them, providing welfare and support to candidates throughout, and reporting back to the ODA. That is a great deal of work, and the British Council can do it for well under the percentage that is required to bolster a large bureaucracy in Paris.

Mr. Foulkes: Brussels.

Mr. Moynihan: The Opposition Front Bench must note that UNESCO is based in Paris, not Brussels.

The network of 15 regional offices in the United Kingdom is critical to the work of the British Council. The concept of the British Council is to keep a small decentralised head office. The World Health Organisation has achieved that. During its 30 years, in recognition of those needs, it has adapted from a large headquarters during its initial period of development. Yet the opposite has been happening at UNESCO.

If the Government decide in favour of withdrawal, it should be part of their strategy to limit the effect of withdrawal on Commonwealth and developing countries. I was pleased to hear the Minister's remarks about the £5 million and to hear that if UNESCO should move on without us next year, that money will not be clawed back but will continue to be used to promote educational, cultural and scientific work overseas. The British Council is the national body charged with that task. In the event of British withdrawal from UNESCO, our annual spending of about £5 million should be diverted to the council, which can be relied upon to spend the money efficiently. I urge the Government to follow that course of action.

2 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): If my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) has curtailed his remarks to enable me to make a brief contribution, I am grateful. However, I do not believe that the House will consider it a worthwhile gesture on his part, because I cannot emulate his depth of knowledge on these matters. His understanding of the subject, as shown by his remarks, is well known throughout the House.

I agree with many of the criticisms that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East and other hon. Members have advanced during the debate. One advantage of speaking late in a debate is that most of the arguments, if not all, have been deployed and articulated to their full. One can top up those arguments or try to put a new dimension on them, but I am not optimistic that I can do so. Therefore, I shall speak in broad terms.

Many of the criticisms have been well founded. However, I do not criticise the Government for announcing their intention to withdraw, because it had a distinct and beneficial effect upon UNESCO. I shall say more later about tactics and how they could be deployed to advantage in the future, but to say that an organisation has erred does not imply that we must leave it. A phrase that has been quoted by several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East, is that we should lead from within rather than without.

[Mr. Keith Best]

When we consider in historical terms the overall concept of the United Nations and its organisations, such as UNESCO, we realise that this century has been unique. The concept that world problems need global solutions has been institutionalised for the first time since the Roman Catholic Church held spiritual, and some temporal, sway over most of the known world many centuries before the birth of the nation state.

The enshrinement of the belief that global solutions are needed for some of our problems was very much the motivation behind the founding fathers of the League of Nations, and behind the creation of the United Nations and the universal declaration of human rights.

Only in the last decade have we seen an acknowledgement by the majority of countries that other countries have an interest in the scrutiny of the internal matters of individual nation states. I sometimes wonder whether the Soviet Union realised what it was doing when it signed the Helsinki accord, bearing in mind that it was an acknowledgement, for the first time, that the Soviet Union would invite international scrutiny of its internal affairs, especially on human rights. That is a welcome trend, but it is part of the overall belief that some matters are beyond the scope of individual nation states, and that some matters are beyond the scope even of nation states that have come together in regional groupings. Some matters need international backing, which comes from the United Nations.

I shall not dwell on the Select Committee's report, because it has been mentioned many times. I welcome its in-depth study of the position, and I agree with many of its conclusions. However, it would be foolish to say that, because a Select Committee recommends a course of action, the House should follow suit automatically and recommend that action to the Government. I do not pretend that the Select Committee's report is anything other than persuasive and cogent evidence. It is not conclusive.

Nor shall I dwell on the Sofia reforms. No doubt cold water has been poured on them, because many regard them as insubstantial reforms. However, not only were the plans for each of UNESCO's 14 major programmes adopted by consensus, but the operational budget was adopted by acclamation. I am reading from the press notice, which has no doubt been quoted by many hon. Members. It showed a zero growth rate, as well as a 25 per cent. cut in budget to take account of American withdrawal. All the proposals in Sofia were agreed by the participating nations.

The economic argument has been fully articulated. Does the United Kingdom receive back almost twice as much as its annual contribution to UNESCO? That is an important matter, and a material factor if one considers the position in purely nationalistic terms.

The House should consider Britain's influence on the rest of the world. For many years we have been in the happy position — it has been enhanced under this Government—of other nations looking to Britain to take the lead in some areas. We are still regarded as a people capable of achieving compromise and a sensible resolution of conflict, and our diplomats are welcome everywhere in the world. That is why other nations wait for us to take the lead in many international organisations. I am worried by the fact that, after the threat by Britain and the United States to withdraw, there has been little movement from other countries to withdraw from UNESCO. I should be worried if Britain took a stance that identified it completely with the United States in this matter. Although I appreciate that the Government will take an individual view, there is always the danger that we shall be lumped together with the United States, which is not always helpful. However, I acknowledge and welcome the fact that the United States is our closest ally. I often tell my friends in America that the only other country in which I would find it comfortable to live is the United States. One cannot pay a greater tribute to another country.

I am worried that the Soviet bloc influence in UNESCO will increase if Britain withdraws, and I suspect that that, more than many other factors, will influence the Government's consideration of the matter.

We live in a delicately balanced world. That balance is sometimes upset. We shall not improve that balance if we hand over control of UNESCO to countries in a particular part of the world. Our threat to withdraw from UNESCO has concentrated opinion, and it will probably lead to further reform. However, our threat to withdraw can have a beneficial effect only if that threat can be exercised. If Britain withdraws from UNESCO, the threat can no longer be exercised.

I hope hon. Members do not believe that I am being unduly simplistic. What I have said is so axiomatic as not to need reiteration, but it is necessary to place it on record. If we relinquish our bargaining factor by withdrawing from UNESCO, no longer shall we be able to exercise influence over its development. UNESCO will not be destroyed, but we shall have lost the opportunity to influence what goes on there. That would cause me very grave concern. If, as happens frequently, we disagree with United Nations decisions, we do not say that we shall withdraw. It is the same principle.

UNESCO has a valuable role to play in scientific and cultural developments. At the fireside summit, as it will probably be called, agreement was reached to increase cultural exchanges. There is a time-honoured phrase, "knowledge dispels fear." One of the greatest problems confronting mankind is to ensure that there is greater mutual understanding. If we do not achieve that aim, fear will be generated. Fear breeds mistrust, and mistrust breeds conflict. Therefore, I urge the Government not to withdraw from UNESCO. We must continue to apply pressure, and we must ensure that that pressure has a beneficial effect. Withdrawal from UNESCO would mean that Britain was relinquishing a solemn duty that it owes to the rest of the world.

2.12 pm

Mr. Foulkes: The overwhelming view of hon. Members is that Britain should not withdraw from UNESCO. However, the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) perpetuates some completely out-of-date and discredited myths. On the question of decentralisation, he ought to know that, according to the study, 82·6 per cent. of the appropriations for the major programmes and for programme support was used to finance activities that are carried out away from headquarters. Further decentralisation was agreed in Sofia, and implementation of the decentralisation programme has now been agreed. Action has been taken but the hon. Gentleman has not acknowledged it. He is a

little naive if he believes in the generosity of the Treasury. It will not hand back money to the Department from which it clawed it back.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said that UNESCO had not complained about the abuse of human rights in the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. The hon. and learned Gentleman ought to know that UNESCO is the only agency which has a procedure by which an individual from any state can file a complaint against a Government who it considers is violating human rights. The majority of human rights cases have been brought against the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries, who wanted to abolish this right. It was because the United Kingdom and other countries opposed its abolition that it was decided at Sofia not to proceed with abolition. UNESCO's determination to defend those rights would be weakened if the United Kingdom withdrew.

It was suggested that because the overwhelming view in this debate was against withdrawal the Government should take no notice of it because this is a Friday. It was outrageous of the hon. and learned Member for Burton to say that. Perfectly adequate notice was given to every hon. Member that this debate would take place. Indeed, we had more notice of it than we get on many other occasions. The Government set the date, and I see behind me hon. Members from Scotland and Wales, and it is more difficult for hon. Members who represent Scottish constituencies to be here on a Friday than it is for other hon. Members.

If consulting the House of Commons is to mean anything, account must be taken of the views that have been expressed today. The view expressed against withdrawal has been, if not unanimous, overwhelming. That view has been expressed from the Labour party, the Conservative party, the alliance and the nationalists. It was expressed by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on behalf of the alliance and by myself on behalf of the official Opposition. There was only one small voice against, that of the hon. Member for Lewisham, East. Can we set the opinion of Lewisham against the rest of the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth, the European Community and many others?

I underline a point that was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who informed me that he might not be present for the final speeches, and by my hon. Friends the Members for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). They asked whether, should the Government take us out of UNESCO, the next Labour Government would take us back in. The only reason why I did not deal with that in my introductory remarks was that I fervently hoped that the Government would take account of the views of the Commonwealth, of the Community, of this House and of the overwhelming majority of people and stay in UNESCO. I still fervently hope that. However, I put it on record on behalf of the official Opposition that when we are in government, if we are no longer members, we will take Britain back into our rightful place as members of UNESCO.

2.17 pm

Mr. Raison: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to what has been an interesting debate. I shall not plead that Friday afternoon debates do not matter. I accept that Friday is a full day for the House and that hon. Members have expressed their views in today's debate.

I said at the outset that I would listen carefully to the views of Members. There is no point in having debates if views are not taken into account. I shall, therefore, consider carefully all that has been said, although we have heard some far-fetched arguments.

In the background has been the useful report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, and it is right that we should have debated that. I discussed a number of the ingredients in my opening speech, and I shall not go over that ground again.

I thought that there was one moment in the debate when we would take off into a cloud of conspiracy theories of a ludicrous kind. Various versions of that conspiracy theory were placed before us. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) talked about a Garrick club plot. That had rings of the 17th century, except that Garrick was an 18th century figure. The idea that people had sat down in that convivial atmosphere—I am always delighted to be asked there—and worked out a subtle plot with which to undermine UNESCO was absurd.

We had a characteristic variant of the conspiracy theory from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) — who has disappeared, I presume, in a cloud of smoke, though I accept that he informed the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley that he might not be present at this stage—who advanced the proposition that the question of leaving UNESCO derived from an unholy and mysterious combination of the security services and a threatened media mogul. Has anyone heard anything more ridiculous than that?

It was also suggested that it was pressure from the United States Government that led us to give our notice a year ago. That is complete nonsense. It is true, of course, that the United States gave notice, and has indeed left UNESCO, but the whole approach of the United States Government has been very different from ours. They gave notice, after which they played only a rather spasmodic part in the reform process. When we gave notice a year ago we said — and we have stuck to it — that we would continue to operate actively in trying to bring about reform.

I assure the House categorically that the Americans made up their own mind. They did not try to persuade other people to go along with them. We have been under no pressure from the American Government to follow their course of action. The decisions that we have taken have been our decisions.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister really expect us to believe that? It is stretching the credibility of the House too far to suggest that it is a coincidence that we followed immediately behind the Americans.

Will the Minister admit that there have been contacts between the British Government and the American Government on the question, that there has been pressure, and that the former United States ambassador to UNESCO, now the ambassador to Luxembourg, has been involved in that pressure? I have information to that effect, and I should be surprised if the Minister does not have it.

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. Of course we have talked to the Americans. We have also talked to the Europeans, to the Commonwealth and to the Japanese. I have talked to Nordics, to Malaysians and to Brazilians. I have talked to practically everybody under

[Mr. Raison]

the sun about the matter. It is simply not the case that we have been subjected to pressure by the Americans to take any particular course of action. I say that categorically, and it is absolutely true. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept it.

It was also suggested that in some ways the Government are involved in an attack on internationalism. The point was raised by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and also, in a sense, by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and others. It is not an attack on internationalism, and in no sense are we out to destroy the United Nations system. That is far from the truth. But our belief is that it does no service to the United Nations system to tolerate within it organisations which are badly failing to fulfil their duties. That is what the argument has been about. We have said that, if the campaign to get reform does not succeed, we shall implement the notice that we gave a year ago.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed drew some kind of comparison with an alleged threat to the European Convention on Human Rights, but it was only on 24 October that the Home Secretary announced to the House that the United Kingdom was renewing for a further five years the right of individual petition to the European Commission of Human Rights and was accepting for the next five years the compulsory jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. That is significant evidence that the idea that we are trying to undermine internationalism is far from the truth.

I acknowledge that in the Commonwealth there is a genuine desire for us to stay in UNESCO. I acknowledge also that representations have been made to that effect. When I was in Sofia recently I had a meeting with Commonwealth representatives and that was the tenor of their argument, but one has to pause and think about the strength and intensity of that feeling.

Although at the Heads of Government meeting at Nassau there was a passing reference to the United Nations institutions, the Commonwealth representatives completely failed to take the opportunity of that meeting to raise the question of UNESCO.

Mr. Foulkes *rose——*

Mr. Raison: That is true. They were very busy with South Africa, but they talked about other things, and there was an opportunity to talk about UNESCO. If it had been a question of paramount importance to the Commonwealth countries, they had a chance to raise it, but they did not take it.

Mr. Foulkes: Can the Minister tell me whether 49 Commonwealth high commissioners have got together on any other issue and twice asked to see the Foreign Secretary to press a point? That has happened on this issue. Have they done it on any other issue? It demonstrates their strength of feeling on this matter.

Mr. Raison: I cannot off the cuff give a factual answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. I have already acknowledged that the Commonwealth Governments have expressed that view. I believe that the evidence at Nassau bears out the fact that, as far as the Commonwealth and Europe are concerned, we have not had pressure of the kind that would indicate that they have given this very high priority.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley quoted a report from the United States which appeared in *The Guardian*, which claimed that the British delegation in Sofia had expressed satisfaction with the results. In my opening speech I made it clear what I thought about many of the reports that appear in *The Guardian*. In this and other matters they often stray far from accuracy. The hon. Gentleman quoted a secondhand account from a secondhand and completely unconfirmed report. The British delegation at Sofia was careful to pass no overall judgments about what was or was not achieved. It did, however, make certain formal statements expressing the Government's disappointment on certain specific points.

The House will agree that the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Sir P. Blaker) was both thoughtful and knowledgeable. He stressed the difficulties of the decision, and I understand that and accept that the arguments must be weighed very carefully.

My right hon. Friend said that we should extend our period of notice. That would be possible, as other hon. Members have said, but I think that there are certain difficulties about that course. Would it really make sense to prolong what would inevitably be a period of uncertainty? If my right hon. Friend has in mind a one-year extension—I am not sure whether that is his view, but others have asked for a one-year extension—we must recognise that that would take us to a point halfway in the biennial cycle, that is halfway between one general conference and another. The general conference really gives us the best opportunity to review what progress has been made. I do not dismiss the points made by my right hon. Friend, but I think that there are practical difficulties about them.

My right hon. Friend also raised the specific points of decentralisation from Paris and the proportion of work done there. On 1 July 1985, 25·6 per cent. of all UNESCO's staff in post were employed away from the Paris headquarters. It is true that some slight movement away from Paris is taking place, and that is certainly one of the things for which we have been pressing. There is similarly a slight movement away from Paris in the actual implementation of the programmes. Much of the work performed in Paris has results elsewhere. For example, the UNESCO scholarship scheme is run from Paris, but the scholarships are, of course, awarded to people in other places.

The figures may be argued about and interpreted in different ways. It is true, however, that UNESCO has been an over-centralised organisation, not only in terms of the volume of work done in Paris, but in terms of the power within the management. One of the points that we made strongly about the management of UNESCO was its failure to delegate decisions, which had a consequent damaging effect.

Another important point to arise during the debate was what would happen if we decided to leave UNESCO. I have already set out the Government's view about what would happen to the money that would be released. I made it clear that we would be able to find other uses for the money, within the aid programme, perhaps through the British Council, in education, science and culture

programmes—issues with which UNESCO is concerned. I repeat that it is possible to find other ways of supporting education and science in the Third world. Indeed, my Department already does so, to good effect. That will certainly continue.

As for the international scientific organisations, it is possible in a number of cases—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Monday 25th November, the motion in the name of Mr. Neil Kinnock, relating to Education (S.I., 1985, No. 1126), may be proceeded with until half-past Eleven o'clock, or for one and a half hours after it has been entered upon, whichever is the later.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS SHIPPING SERVICES

Ordered,

That the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 63 (Constitution of standing committees), paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 65 (Nomination of standing committees) and Standing Order No. 79 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.) shall apply to the draft Undertaking between the Secretary of State for Scotland and Regionfields Ltd. trading as Easdale Island Shipping Line as if it were a draft statutory instrument; and that the said draft Undertaking be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. — *[Mr. Durant.]*

Mrs. Ellen Emanuel

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): On 28 March this year, a 69-year-old lady, Mrs. Ellen Emanuel, a constituent of mine from Leven, Fife, was killed in a road accident by a drunken car driver, Mr. Anthony Sharp, a 37-year-old engineer of Luss road, Glasgow. In the same accident, Mrs. Emanuel's husband, aged 63, had his rib cage crushed, suffered a broken femur, and had his nose almost torn of. He has been crippled and disfigured for life. Their grandson, 14, received bruises and cuts and still has traces of glass in his head.

This was a shocking case of criminal irresponsibility by Mr. Sharp. He was charged with contraventions of various sections of the Road Traffic Act 1972, and on 13 September, in the Kirkcaldy sheriff court, he pleaded guilty to causing death by reckless driving and to driving while drunk. Never could a case have been more clear-cut.

The case came before Sheriff Macarthur at Kirkcaldy, and it was disclosed that Mr. Sharp had a blood-alcohol level of 213 mg—almost three times the permitted limit —and that the test was taken at hospital almost three hours after the accident. I understand that there were no mitigating circumstances whatsover. Certainly, none was offered by Mr. Sharp's defence in court.

Nor was this the first drunk-driving offence by Mr. Sharp. On 6 January this year, in Glasgow, he was convicted of a similar offence and banned from driving for one year. Therefore, in the March accident, when he killed one of my constituents, he was driving despite that ban. According to a letter from the family to me, dated 26 September, at the initial hearing of the case in Kirkcaldy the defence asked for leniency and was apparently listened to sympathetically by Sheriff Macarthur who deferred sentence until 14 October to enable him to make further inquiries. I do not know the results of those inquiries or what they revealed. I think that, in the light of subsequent events, the public are entitled to know that information.

The fears of the Emanuel family were amply confirmed by the judgment made by Sheriff Macarthur on 14 October. According to a report in the Scottish *Daily Record* the day after the case, the sheriff had told Sharp, a £170 a week engineer, that he would not gaol him because he would lose a steady job. Instead, the man was sentenced, awarded, got off—call it what we like—with 240 hours of community service and his driving licence was suspended for five years. The Emanuel family was deeply shocked at the apparent leniency of that sentence and wrote to me asking me to do what I could to help.

I wrote to and saw privately the Solicitor-General for Scotland and sought advice from lawyers in the Labour party. The Solicitor-General will not mind if I quote his reply of 11 November. He said:

"While I note that your constituents are dissatisfied with the disposal of this case, I have to say that this is not a matter appropriate for my intervention or comment. The Crown traditionally take a neutral stance with regard to the matter of sentence, which is entirely a matter for the court. All that the Crown can do is to present all the relevant facts to the Court to assist in the exercise of its discretion. Thereafter the consideration of the appropriate disposal is entirely within the discretion of the presiding judge. That being so, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on this matter. In your letter you ask me to institute an independent inquiry into this case."

[Mr. Willie W. Hamilton]

That was a proposition that the Emanuel family put to me. The letter continues:

"I have, however, no powers to do this. Furthermore, the Crown has no right of appeal in connection with the appropriateness of the sentence imposed in any particular case."

I wish to make one or two general observations on the matter. I think I am entitled — indeed, it is my responsibility — to do so. The case received wide publicity not just in Scotland but in other parts of the United Kingdom. Without exception, public opinion found the sentence derisory and incomprehensible. I subsequently received letters from people in Scotland and from an organisation called the Campaign against Drunk Driving. The letter came from someone in Pershore. It states:

"Since we launched the campaign in May this year we have been overwhelmed by victim families making contact and complaining bitterly about the leniency of courts towards drunken drivers and the complete disregard shown towards victim families. It is quite clear from cases drawn to our attention that the law is not being properly enforced and 'drunken killers' are escaping justice in many cases for causing death to innocent people . . . When it is realised that during the past ten years 62,000 people have been killed, 800,000 have been seriously injured and 2,500,000 have been slightly injured on our roads we are experiencing what would be in any other circumstances a national disaster. A very large percentage of these deaths and injuries can be related to alcohol and yet little effort is made to detect offenders.

Government have admitted that only one drunken driver in 250 is caught but other experts estimate the true figure to be only one in 2,000."

These are the figures quoted to me. I do not know how accurate they are. Will the Minister comment on them and say whether there are any accurate figures available for the United Kingdom as a whole and for Scotland separately?

It is appropriate that the debate is taking place just before Christmas and new year festivities. I understand that the Government are making a determined effort to cut down on the appalling toll on our roads. The lethal combination of long dark nights, icy roads and drink is likely to produce an army of drivers like Mr. Sharp and there will be a sizeable death toll as a consequence. There is no guarantee that the same Mr. Sharp will not be out on the road again in January, drunk, dangerous and lethal. My view is that drunken drivers like him are murderers and ought to be treated as such.

I again ask the Minister, can he produce any statistics showing not only the numbers, but the sentences meted out to drunken drivers? How many have caused death in the past three years? If no such statistics are available, it would be a good idea to start to collect them to let the people know what is happening and what ought to happen. Meanwhile, in the light of the season, I hope that a method will be devised, if machinery is not already present, to advise courts, judges and sheriffs of the vital importance of imposing gaol sentences on the murderers on our roads.

According to newspaper reports, Mr. Emanuel, when he heard about the sentence, remarked, with understandable vehemence, that only a week before the sheriff passed judgment, he had gaoled a man for 60 days for spitting at a policeman. Only a week or two ago we read in the newspapers here that an alleged football hooligan was gaoled for life. I am well aware of the rules of the House, and I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are listening carefully to what I am saying. Those rules preclude me or any other Member from criticising the judges in our courts. It is a well known, well respected and well understood rule. I must therefore be careful in what I say, but I would be failing in my duty as the Member of Parliament representing the Emanuel family if I did not say that the case and the judgment have caused great dismay and anger in Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom.

Over the past few years violent crime has soared upwards, despite the fact that the Government have devoted vast sums of taxpayers' money to police pay and equipment and new, bigger and better prisons. Nevertheless, violent crime is continuing to soar and drunken drivers are a considerable part of that criminal violence. Unless there are compelling and mitigating circumstances, the courts should have the power, if they do not already, to impose heavy gaol sentences, to suspend driving licences for life and to order the payment of compensation to the innocent victims.

Last year's slogan on drunken driving was mushy and ineffective in the extreme. If the Government have not already decided on a slogan for the coming festive season, I should like to suggest one: "Drunken drivers can be murderers. Keep sober or risk a gaol sentence."

I hope that the Minister will reply in the same spirit as I have made my case.

2.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) has raised several important issues. However, before addressing those issues, I wish to extend my sympathy to the bereaved family of Mrs. Emanuel and in particular to Mr. Emanuel, who has to bear not only the loss of his wife but the very serious injuries that he himself suffered in that tragic accident. The whole family has my deepest sympathy, and, I am sure, that of all hon. Members.

At the risk of repeating points already made by the hon. Gentleman, it might help the House to have a brief history of the case describing the way in which it was dealt with by the Crown and the presiding sheriff.

As a result of an incident on 28 March 1985 on the Kirkcaldy to Kinghorn road, Anthony Sharp, of 44 Luss road, Drumoyne, Glasgow, was reported by the police to the procurator fiscal at Kirkcaldy. The circumstances of the incident were investigated by the procurator fiscal, and in July of this year a precognition was submitted to the Crown Office for the instructions of Crown counsel as to whether criminal proceedings should be taken, and if so, in what court. Crown counsel instructed that Mr. Sharp be prosecuted before a sheriff and a jury on a charge of contravention of section 1 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 —causing death by reckless driving—or alternatively a contravention of section 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1972, which is a charge of careless driving. He was also charged with a contravention of section 6 of the Road Traffic Act 1972, that is, with driving with more than the permitted amount of alcohol in his body. As the hon. Gentleman said, the actual proportion of alcohol found in his blood after analysis was 230 mg. of alcohol in 100 ml of blood. The prescribed limit is presently 80mg of alcohol in 100 ml of blood.

In Kirkcaldy sheriff court on 23 September 1985, Mr. Sharp pled guilty to the more serious alternative in the first charge, that is, causing death by reckless driving contrary to section 1 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. He also pled guilty to the charge of driving while the proportion of

alcohol in his breath exceeded the prescribed limit. The sherriff decided to defer sentence until 14 October 1985 so that background reports could be obtained and then a community service order, requiring him to perform 240 hours' unpaid work, was made. He was also disqualified from driving for a period of five years.

The hon. Gentleman has concentrated on the leniency of the sentence imposed by the court on Mr. Sharp. That is not a matter on which I or any other member of the Government can comment, as the hon. Gentleman will know, and as my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for Scotland described in the letter quoted by the hon. Gentleman.

The Government's responsibilities are confined to ensuring that the maximum sentences available to the courts are adequate for dealing with all types of crimes and offences that came before them. I shall return to that aspect in a moment, but I wish first to make it absolutely clear that the sentence imposed by a court in any particular case is a matter for that court subject only to the accused's right of appeal. It is for the judge alone, taking into account all known mitigating and aggravating factors, to impose the sentence most appropriate to the offence and the offender. That can be subject to review only by the High Court if a case comes there on appeal. It would be constitutionally improper for the Government to interfere, or to attempt to interfere, with the exercise by the judiciary of their independent sentencing discretion; and it would be equally improper for me or any member of the Government to comment on the exercise of that discretion in any particular case.

As to sentencing policy, the Government are fully aware of the public concern over road safety and set up a review of road traffic law — under the chairmanship of Dr. Peter North—immediately following the publication of the report of the Select Committee on Transport. The review body hopes to be able to publish its report by the end of next year. The remit of the review is to consider what improvements might be made to certain aspects of road traffic law, particularly in relation to simplification, effectiveness and acceptability. One of those aspects is the structure of and penalties for the offences in sections 1 and 3 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 — causing death by reckless driving, reckless driving and careless driving.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that road traffic law is fraught with difficulty, not least because the motor vehicle combines the everyday with the potentially dangerous. Often a relatively trivial error of judgment on the part of a driver will have disastrous consequences—although I am not saying that is what happened in this case. On the other hand, a gross misjudgment or act of folly might cause little or no damage.

It is often argued that the offenders in cases such as this should be charged with culpable homicide, instead of a contravention of section 1 of the Road Traffic Act 1972. The practice of the Crown in recent years in Scotland is to prosecute for the common law crime only in a small minority of particularly grave and serious cases. There are two reasons for this. The first is that juries are notoriously reluctant to convict of the common law crime and this was, of course, partly the reason for the introduction of the statutory offence. The second reason is that the penalty likely to be imposed in respect of the common law crime would rarely exceed that available for a contravention of the statutory offence, for which the maximum penalty is, in high court cases, five years' imprisonment and, in sheriff court cases, two years' imprisonment. Most cases can therefore be appropriately prosecuted by charging the statutory offence. However, should there be cases of an especially grave or serious nature, the Crown will give proper consideration to proceeding not on the basis of the statutory charge but on the basis of the common law crime of culpable homicide, where the maximum penalty available on conviction is life imprisonment. This is, however, entirely a matter for the Crown prosecuting authorities.

I turn now to the problem of the drunk driver. The Government introduced in 1983 special arrangements for that category of offender who is classified as "high risk", and who may have an alcohol problem. Those disqualified twice within 10 years for driving or attempting to drive when on both occasions their alcohol level was two and a half times the legal limit are advised to seek help during the period of their disqualification.

Before their driving licences can be renewed, such offenders must undergo medical, and perhaps psychiatric, examination together with blood analysis, and must convince the Secretary of State — in this context the Secretary of State for Transport—that they do not have an alcohol problem.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to accept that the Government are fully aware of the problems and have taken and will continue to take all the measures we can to deal with this major social problem. In particular, I express the Government's abhorrence of the grossly irresponsible behaviour of those who drink and drive, all too often with tragic consequences of the sort that we have heard described today.

The hon. Member asked what statistical information was available about drunk driving. Obviously as criminal statistics do not show the numbers of drunk drivers who are never caught, I cannot tell him about that. However, I can tell him that in 1984 the police recorded 14,976 offences of drunk driving in Scotland. In the same year, 14,296 cases of drunk driving were proceeded with, and of that number 13,556 had the charges proved. The disposal in the bulk of the cases—12,758—was a fine, while 291 offenders received custodial sentences, 47 were put on probation—five with the condition of community service — and 106 made the subject of community service orders. One offender received an absolute discharge and 353 were admonished. These are the most recent figures available. It is not possible to provide statistics on the sentences imposed on drunken drivers who have caused death, as those offences and any subsequent disposal by the courts are recorded under separate headings and are not readily identifiable.

The hon. Member also raised questions about the presiding judge. As I have explained, I cannot comment on any particular case and anything I may say must not be taken to reflect in any way on the sentence imposed in the case raised by the hon. Member for Fife, Central. However, perhaps it would be helpful if I explained the general position. As the hon. Member will appreciate, many persons aggrieved at the outcome of a case, whether it be a civil or a criminal matter, will attribute failure to the inadequacy of the presiding judge. To facilitate the handling of such complaints — and here it would be appropriate for me to say that their volume is slight in relation to the amount of business coming before the courts —arrangements have been made under which the sheriff principal of the sheriffdom concerned will look into the

[The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland]

complaint in the first instance. The sheriff principal's undertaking this duty was envisaged by the Grant committee on the sheriff court. Paragraph 330 of that report makes it clear that the sheriff principal

"should be the channel of communication between his sheriffdom and the central authority responsible for the organisation of the sheriff courts, and the normal recipient of complaints from above or below. He would therefore be concerned with the conduct of sheriffs and court staff in all matters which, whether arising directly out of the discharge of their duties or not, might affect their capacity to discharge their responsibilities and their standing in the community. We would not give to the sheriff principal any formal disciplinary powers of his own. Matters requiring disciplinary action, if they ever arose, would be reported to the central authority."

In the great majority of cases the sheriff principal will himself deal with the complaint perhaps by telling the complainer of any right of appeal which might still be open to him or explaining some point of court procedure which had a bearing on the case and outwith the knowledge and experience of a lay person. There could be, however, the kind of occasion envisaged by the Grant committee when a complaint was of such a nature that the sheriff principal, after due inquiry, felt obliged to report the matter to the Scottish Courts Administration, the central authority for the sheriff courts, which advises my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on such matters.

In considering the Sheriff Courts (Scotland) Act 1971, which gave effect to most of the Grant committee recommendations, Parliament made no provision for the disciplining of the shrieval bench other than that provided for under section 12 of the Act which deals with removal from office, and in terms which makes it quite clear that the Executive can intervene only in cases of doubt about a sheriff's fitness for office by reason of inability, neglect of duty or misbehaviour.

The independence of the judiciary is an essential protection to enable judges to carry out their judicial duties without fear or favour, affection or ill will. It means that a judge is protected from arbitrary interference or dismissal by the Executive, so that he can do his job as a judge free from the fear that the decisions which he makes may lead to his removal from office. The doctrine of the independence of the judiciary does not mean that a member of the shrieval bench is above the law or that he can never be removed from office in any circumstances.

The procedure under the Act for the removal of a sheriff contains elaborate provisions which are themselves safeguards of the doctrine of judicial independence. The Secretary of State cannot make an order removing a sheriff simply because he does not like what that sheriff is doing. There must first be an investigation by the two senior judges of the Scottish judiciary, the Lord President of the Court of Session and the Lord Justice Clerk, either of their own accord or on the request of the Secretary of State. Once the inquiry has begun the Secretary of State takes no part in it and the matter is left entirely to the Lord President of the Court of Session and the Lord Justice Clerk until the investigation has been completed and the judges have presented their report. If the report finds that the sheriff remains fit for office, the Secretary of State can take no action whatever view he may himself have formed of the conduct which has been under investigation. It is only when the two senior judges report that what the sheriff has done, or failed to do, amounts to misbehaviour and that, because of that, he is unfit to hold his judicial office that the Secretary of State can make the order. Moreover, the order, when made, must lie before Parliament for 40 days, and is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution in either House—a further safeguard against an arbitrary interference with the principle of judicial independence.

In conclusion, I say again that all our sympathies must go to the Emanuel family. There is nothing any of us can say or do which will console them fully. Equally, no disposal of the accused which the sheriff could impose would restore their loss. I echo the hon. Member's condemnation of drunken driving. Like him, I hope that that call will be heeded over the Christmas and new year periods. People should remember that criminal behaviour and tragic incidents such as this arise from drunk driving and can easily be avoided by not driving while under the influence of drink.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 25 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

London Electricity Board

1. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the London Electricity Board; and what subjects were discussed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): My right hon. Friend last met the chairman at a luncheon on 19 November. One of the main subjects discussed was the efficient use of energy.

Mr. Cox: I note that reply, but is the Minister aware that at this time of the year hundreds of thousands of elderly people spend much of their time in bed because of their fear of the kind of electricity bills that they would have if they kept their heating on? When will his Department and the respective electricity boards devise a scheme that brings meaningful help to pensioners and those people on low incomes with their electricity bills, certainly during the winter months?

Mr. Goodlad: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Government target financial help for fuel costs on those in need through the weekly supplementary benefit rates, including some £400 million in 1984-85 in heating additions for those who need to spend extra on fuel. That is about £140 million more in real terms than in 1978-79. Under the Government's proposals for the reform of social security published on 3 June, separate heating additions will be abolished and an income support scheme introduced, which will continue to provide help towards day-to-day living expenses, including heating. There will be premium rates for special categories of the needy, including pensioners, the sick and disabled and lone parents.

Gas Industry

2. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received regarding the proposed privatisation of British Gas.

9. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about his plans to privatise the British Gas Corporation.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): My right hon. Friend and I have received a number of representations from various organisations and individuals regarding the privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Pike: Is the Secretary of State aware that public opinion shows clearly that there is no belief that this industry should be taken out of public ownership and put into the private sector? People believe that this major source of energy should be kept in public ownership and that that is the right way forward.

Mr. Walker: If the hon. Gentleman believes that, I shall look forward to fighting the next election with the Labour party promising to bring back nationalisation.

Mr. Ron Davies: May I first express my surprise that my question has been linked with question No. 2, because I did not receive the customary notification? However, does the Secretary of State accept that gas prices have risen by 36 per cent. in real terms in the past six years and that that increase falls most heavily on the low-paid and those on fixed incomes? If privatisation is successful, and if world energy prices are stable or fall in real terms, how will those benefits be transferred to the consumer?

Mr. Walker: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman if he was not notified, and I shall look into the reason for that.

I am certain that the price regulation methods that we shall employ will mean that consumers will benefit from the improving efficiency of British Gas in future, and therefore this will be very much to their benefit.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend accept that I and many of my constituents are very much in favour of the privatisation of British Gas? However, will he assure us and many others that the elderly and the disabled, who currently have a good code to protect them in case of disconnection, will continue to have that protection under the new regime?

Mr. Walker: Yes, I can assure my hon. Friend that it is the intention of British Gas to continue with the same code of practice.

Sir Dudley Smith: Privatisation is much to be welcomed, but what will be done under the new arrangements for the significant minority of people who at present do not have a gas supply and who are affronted that they do not?

Mr. Walker: There will be provisions under the legislation whereby in those areas where British Gas does not supply at present it will be open to outside organisations to come in and do so.

Mr. Hardy: How many of those letters have asked the Secretary of State whether he has any reason, other than the attachment to a rather ugly dogma, for the privatisation of a corporation that is inherently and significantly successful, and how many of those letters have asked the Secretary of State whether he subscribes to the view that the privatisation of British Gas is designed to provide the Government with the funds to produce an electoral bribe at the end of this Parliament?

Mr. Walker: Any letters that I might have received stating such arguments would have had Labour party letterheadings.

Mr. Coombs: How many representations have drawn attention to competition as opposed to privatisation? Irrespective of the answer to that question, does my right hon. Friend agree that the gas industry needs the maximum competition, in the interests of keeping gas prices to the consumer as low as possible?

Mr. Walker: Of course. My hon. Friend will recognise that for the domestic user, street by street, competition has not existed since 1845 in Britain, nor does it exist around the world. Competition can apply, as extended by the 1983 Act, and improvements can be made on that. I am certainly in favour of competition, but competition involving several gas pipes down the same street is unlikely.

Mr. Rowlands: Has the right hon. Gentleman drawn any conclusions from the experience of OFTEL? How well does he think domestic telephone users have been protected by OFTEL? Would not the privatisation of gas be a pale imitation of what happened to the telephone industry?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman should reflect on how marvellously the consumer has done under nationalisation, without a regulator. Does the hon. Gentleman recall that, when he was a member of the last Labour Government, in one year, without a regulator, gas prices went up by 12 per cent. at the beginning of the year and by 9 per cent. six months later?

South and East Cleveland

3. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has yet reached conclusions on the exploration for oil and natural gas in south and east Cleveland; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): Surveys have been carried out in the area under exploration licences. No recent exploration wells have been drilled to test the presence of oil or gas.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend accept that that comment will be received with mixed feelings in the area? We should like to know how much more exploration there will be, so that we can try to bring to that area as many jobs as possible through the natural gas industries.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Following surveys, proposals for drilling have to come from the companies involved, and they are subject to normal planning procedures. I agree that our onshore oil and gas industries can bring enormous benefits, particularly in terms of jobs, industrial experience and in other ways. I shall watch developments closely.

Coal Industry

4. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the modified colliery review procedure.

Mr. Peter Walker: At a meeting between the mining unions and the National Coal Board on 30 October, agreement was reached on the composition of the independent review body, which forms the final stage in the modified colliery review procedure.

Mr. Dormand: Are there any circumstances in which the review body can make a recommendation about the accounting procedures used by the National Coal Board before a pit is recommended for closure? Are not many professional accountants critical of the NCB's methods of assessing whether a pit is viable? Does that not have a crucial bearing on the proposal to close Horden colliery in my constituency? Will the Secretary of State comment on that?

Mr. Walker: An independent review body is an independent review body. It can make whatever recommendations it wishes and listen to what arguments it wishes. If the union side puts an argument to that review body, it will come to its own conclusions.

Mrs. Currie: Will my right hon. Friend scotch the rumour spread by the National Union of Mineworkers in my area that all the south Derbyshire pits are under threat of closure? Does he agree that good pits with large reserves and willing and competent work forces are the backbone for the future of the coal industry?

Mr. Walker: Yes. Certainly productivity in a whole range of pits throughout the country, including south Derbyshire, is impressive.

Mr. Mason: May I question the Secretary of State about the colliery review procedure, especially as it affects pit closures and miners' redundancies? Has the right hon. Gentleman decided on legislation to assist miners who, having been on strike for 12 months, are in doubt about their entitlement to mineworkers' redundancy pension benefits? Will he make a statement to give those men an assurance about the future?

Mr. Walker: I cannot make a statement now. The matter is, of course, interconnected with the DHSS, and as soon as conclusions have been reached, I shall make a statement.

Mr. Foot: There is a letter in today's edition of *The Times* from a representative of NACODS. In the light of that, will the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that he will immediately set in hand an investigation to ensure that no illegal, illicit or other pressures are brought to bear to reduce pit safety standards?

Mr. Walker: Obviously action should be taken by the normal authorities against anything illegal. However, I know of no such action being taken.

Mr. Eadie: Is the Secretary of State aware that some of us are not unaware of the role that he played in getting the new modified procedure agreement off the ground? As Secretary of State, he must be aware of the allegations of bribery on the part of the NCB to assist in the formation of a breakaway union. Since the statement of Mr. Jack Jones about being offered pension and car provision represents a most serious offence, will the right hon. Gentleman suspend Mr. MacGregor from duty pending an inquiry into the whole issue?

Mr. Walker: In my judgment the only factor that assisted in the creation of a separate miners' union was the behaviour of the leader of the NUM. Had it not been for that, there would not be a separate union today.

5. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on current investment, employment and output in the Scottish coalfields.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): Considerable amounts are being invested in the Scottish coalfield to ensure the development of high-productivity, low-cost capacity, necessary to secure the future of the industry. I look forward to seeing the progress being made when I visit the Scottish area tomorrow.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister accept that considerable progress is being made in terms of re-engaging sacked miners? When he is in Scotland, will he make representations to the board so as to accelerate that process and to ensure that as many as possible of the 206 dismissed miners are re-employed by the NCB at the earliest possible date? In addition, will he make a statement concerning investment in the Fife coalfield, the Seafield Frances complex, the Longannet complex and, in particular, in the Comrie coalfield in my constituency, which seems to be under threat?

Mr. Hunt: The first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is a matter for the management at area level. However, I understand that most dismissed miners in the Scottish area, who so wished, have been interviewed for reinstatement and that 63 have been reinstated. The decisions following such reviews must rest with the area management.

As I understand the present position, a very large number of investment projects have been announced by the NCB, including £20 million this year to be invested in new plant alone. In the areas that the hon. Gentleman has referred to, there is a £3 million investment at Castlehill on a new heavy duty coal face and a £4 million investment at Seafield on a new coal face. Very substantial investments are now being made.

Mr. Andy Stewart: As a Scot who represents an English constituency with a coalfield, may I welcome my hon. Friend's statement on Friday about further grant-aid to those who wish to convert their——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I was delayed in getting to the point. Does my hon. Friend agree that that measure will help both Scottish and English coalfields?

Mr. Hunt: I wish that Opposition Members would join my hon. Friend in becoming unashamed salesmen for coal in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dalyell: When the Minister steps on to the tarmac tomorrow at Edinburgh airport, will he immediately ask his driver to take him up the M8 so that he can smell the Polkemmet bing, which has been on fire for seven weeks and which is a major health hazard to that part of Scotland?

Mr. Hunt: I am not quite sure what that has to do with the main question. However, I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the Polkemmet colliery. His point had not previously been brought to my notice, but I shall, of course, look into it.

Mr. Eadie: I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the steps taken by the NCB and the NUM in Scotland in discussing investment and output, although much more still needs to be done. Does the hon. Gentleman not realise that there are still victimised miners who have not been re-engaged, even though the strike unded more than seven months ago? When he visits Monktonhall colliery tomorrow, will he inform himself a little more on that matter?

Mr. Hunt: I look forward to meeting representatives of the union when I visit Monktonhall tomorrow morning. I remind the hon. Gentleman that investment in the Scottish coalfield has been substantially higher in real terms under a Conservative Government than it was under a Labour Government. Investment between 1979-80 and 1983-84, compared with 1974-75 to 1978-79, was 43 per cent. higher.

Gas Industry

6. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his policy towards competition in the gas industry and on the implications for the regulation of the industry if the privatisation proposals are implemented.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The provisions of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982, which have opened up the possibility of greater competition in the gas industry, will be continued.

Mr. McCrindle: As one who supports both the privatisation of British Gas and the concept of competition, can my right hon. Friend tell me why it proved possible to allow Mercury to use British Telecom lines to mount some competition when BT was privatised but apparently it is impossible for British Gas pipelines to be used for a similar purpose?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My hon. Friend should address any questions about BT to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. It is common knowledge within the industry that the provisions of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982 have had a considerable beneficial effect on competition in the industry.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister acknowledge that there is real concern about the extent to which competition by British Gas will change vis-a-vis other industries in the energy sector following privatisation? There is also concern about the Government's proposal to allow an inflation minus X per cent. pricing policy. During the passage of the Bill through the House, will the right hon. Gentleman seriously consider setting up a public utilities commission, which could apply the same control and regulatory standards to a privatised British Gas as apply to the electricity and other energy industries?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I note the hon. Gentleman's attachment to bureaucracy, and I am sure that we shall have time to debate that during the passage of the Bill.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: If we proceed to privatisation, will there be a more competitive distribution of shares than was the case with Britoil?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I hope that, as happened with British Telecom, those working in the management of the industry, and others, will have an opportunity to share in the industry. One of the great purposes of privatisation is to ensure that ownership is spread very much more widely. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support.

Mr. Rowlands: The Minister spoke about the beneficial competition that has already occurred under the 1982 Act. How many schemes has he approved under the provisions of that Act for private use of any of the pipelines presently owned by British Gas?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman knows that no schemes have been approved. However, from his knowledge of the industry, he equally knows that there have been extremely beneficial effects — as anyone in the oil industry will tell him.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

7. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much of the £20 million invested in National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd., has now been taken up by former miners.

14. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. in providing alternative jobs in coalmining areas.

Mr. David Hunt: In little over a year of operation, NCB (Enterprises) Ltd. has committed direct financial assistance to 188 projects, 35 per cent. of which have been established by former NCB employees. These projects involve fundings to date of £4 million, and have so far helped to create some 2,700 potential job opportunities throughout the coalfields.

Mr. Hannam: I thank my hon. Friend for that very encouraging reply. Does it not confirm that this Government are doing more in the creation of jobs and enterprises in mining areas than was done by the previous Labour Government? Will he continue to give maximum support to the diversity of enterprise in the mining communities?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right to point out that when 330 pits were closed by the Labour party there was no enterprise company. The Government strongly support this excellent initiative by the NCB to breathe new life into declining mining areas. I am happy to report that National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. is supporting projects that are creating jobs at the rate of 500 a month.

Mrs. Clwyd: Is the Minister aware that, since 1979, we have lost 11,000 jobs in the mining industry in Wales and that only 700 alternative jobs have been promised? Where are the other jobs coming from?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Lady should be aware of the excellent initiative in her constituency, where, thanks to the enterprise company, the Merthyr enterprise agency is now to extend its operations into the Cynon Valley. On Friday the NCB handed a substantial cheque to the Merthyr-Aberdare Development of Enterprise. That sum of £20,000 is the first of three annual instalments in support of the newly extended agency. I hope that she will give her full support to this important work.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Is my hon. Friend aware that in Leicestershire everything possible is being done to help miners who have chosen to leave the industry, and that those miners are grateful for that assistance? Bearing in mind that this is the party of small businesses, will my hon. Friend do everything possible to promote this type of scheme so that other miners throughout the country who are willing to take voluntary redundancy will have the opportunity of taking advantage of what is an excellent scheme?

Mr. Hunt: I strongly support my hon. Friend's remarks. I hope that everybody with practical ideas will accept that — in the way that my hon. Friend has propounded his view — they should have no worries about approaching National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd., because, with financial help and sound advice from that company, those ideas can be turned into real jobs.

Mr. Barron: Will the Minister accept that the number of jobs being created as a result of the activities of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. is small in relation to the number of jobs that have been lost since the end of the strike, especially in south Yorkshire, apart from the 90,000 or more people who have been unemployed for a long time in that area? Is he aware that it would be preferable if the NCB did not go headlong into colliery closures, thereby making hundreds more people unemployed? Instead, the NCB should keep pits open a little longer and create real jobs, not simply paper statistics which do nothing for the unemployed in my constituency, in which the people of some pit villages are suffering unemployment at the rate of twice the national average?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that for coal to survive in this competitive world it must be competitive. All necessary steps must be taken to ensure that there is not only confidence in coal in the future but that it is a competitive product.

Mr. Ray Powell: Is the Minister aware that St. John's colliery in my constituency has been closed, although it was producing the best coking coal in the world? Is he further aware that it has been announced today that the Government are allowing the National Smokeless Fuel Company to import 20,000 tonnes of coking coal in December into Wales? Would not the £20,000 to which the Minister referred as having been handed out by National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. be better used in developing a new mine at Margam to provide work for the 830 men who have been made redundant at one colliery in my constituency?

Mr. Hunt: The House will be aware that these are early days for the enterprise company. Even so, it has already committed over £1·5 million in aid to new industry and enterprise agencies in south Wales. That achievement should be applauded by hon. Members.

Mr. Ryman: The Minister will be aware of the threatened closure of Bates' colliery, Blyth, making 1,400 men redundant. He will also be aware that the only ray of hope is the independent colliery review procedure, although nobody, least of all the Secretary of State, knows how it works, and therefore no immediate application can be made. Does the Minister appreciate that the resources allocated by the Government to this new organisation do not compensate in any way for 1,400 men being made redundant in my constituency?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Government have said all along that we shall monitor closely the funds available to National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. They are sufficient for its present needs, but they will be kept under careful review.

Mr. Foot: We certainly welcome any jobs that have been created under this scheme, even though the number is small compared with the number of jobs lost. Will the hon. Gentleman give, on behalf of the Government, an absolute assurance that this scheme will not be abandoned after a year or so, and that it will be greatly expanded? Does he recall that this scheme is modelled on the scheme that was introduced in the steel industry? One of the first things that Mr. MacGregor did on going to the steel industry was to say that he would run down the scheme because the job should be done by the Government. We are all glad that Mr. MacGregor might be learning at last. Will the hon. Gentleman guarantee that the scheme will be extended during the next 10 years?

Mr. Hunt: The chairman of the NCB introduced the scheme called NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. It is a very wise investment. The £4 million I cited in my answer to the original question has been invested in projects totalling £25 million. Ministers are constantly giving assurances from the Dispatch Box about the company's future. It has made an excellent start, and it is about time the Opposition realised that.

Standing Charges

8. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation to abolish standing charges on gas and electricity; and if he will make a statement.

18. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has had any recent discussions with the chairman of the Electricity Council on standing charges.

Mr. Goodlad: Standing charges for gas and electricity are a matter for the industries concerned. The charges reflect the fixed costs of maintaining a supply, and their abolition would result in higher unit charges to consumers.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend ascertain what he can do to abolish standing charges for pensioners? Is he aware that, taken over the years, standing charges absorb a whole month's pension and are a considerable imposition on pensioners? It is time something was done.

Mr. Goodlad: Standing charges cover unavoidable costs incurred by the industry, such as in maintaining connections, meter reading, accounting and billing and emergency services. As lost revenue would have to be recovered through increased unit rates, abolition would penalise many of the less well-off, such as the sick and the old, who may have large heating needs. As I said to the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), the Government target financial help with fuel costs on those in need through weekly supplementary benefit rates, including £400 million in 1984-85 in heating additions.

Mr. Atkinson: Is not the main grievance against standing charges the fact that they bear no relationship to usage and consumption? Surely it is not beyond the wit of my hon. Friend's Department or of the industries concerned to come up with a fair scale of standing charges that bear a relationship to usage and consumption.

Mr. Goodlad: I note my hon. Friend's views. In 1982, at the Government's request, each of the industries asked the independent consultants, Deloitte, Haskins and Sells, to review the rationale and level of their standing charges. In both cases it was confirmed that the principle of standing charges was justified and that the costs involved were fairly represented in the charges. Both reports were placed in the Library of the House. The consumer councils of both industries considered the standing charge rebate schemes to be unfair to the majority of consumers. In consultations with the industries, they endorsed the industries' decisions to reduce or abolish the rebates.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does not the hon. Gentleman understand that the pressure to abolish standing charges will continue because they bear most heavily on the hardest hit in the community, such as the unemployed and the old? Will the hon. Gentleman look at this matter again and realise that many of the commercial organisations with problems similar to those of the coal and electricity boards do not impose standing charges in the way that those boards do?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect. Our experience with the rebate scheme showed that much of the rebate went to those not in need, such as second home owners and lock-up garage owners, and that the targeting of the social security benefit system is a much better way of helping those in need.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend agree that abolition of standing charges would shift the financial burden from low consumers to high consumers? Does he further agree that, because many pensioners are necessarily high consumers of energy, abolition of standing charges would not be to their benefit—indeed, quite the reverse?

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend is quite correct.

Mr. Madden: What fairness can there be for a blind constituent of mine who estimates that the cost of the electricity that she uses is about 20p a fortnight, but who has to pay a full standing charge? Will the hon. Gentleman undertake to look urgently at a letter that I have written to him on this case and to send my constituent and me a favourable reply? My constituent and I understand that standing charges bear heaviest on those with the least. We are not impressed with the consultants' reports and the other justifications for doing away with the rebate scheme.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received the hon. Gentleman's letter and I hope to reply to it soon. I cannot accept that the social security system is not the best way to deal with the matter.

Mr. Rowlands: Does the Minister recall that in the autumn statement the Chanceller of the Exchequer imposed upon the electricity industry a negative external financing limit of £1·4 billion? Given that a similar sum will have to be clawed back from the industry, would it not be sensible to meet the demands from both sides of the House concerning standing charges and ensure that in the coming 12 months electricity prices do not rise above the rate of inflation?

Mr. Goodlad: I am amazed at the hon. Gentleman's effrontery, given the record of his party when it was in power over increasing the price of electricity. His question has nothing to do with standing charges. He will be aware that the price of electricity is a matter for the industry. The chairman of the Electricity Council recently told the Select Committee that he expected the next price rise to be about 5 per cent.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Is my hon. Friend aware that Marks and Spencer has fixed overheads but that it does not impose standing charges? Are these charges not a remnant of the attitude of the electricity and gas industries in terms of being more producer than customer-orientated?

Mr. Goodlad: I am not responsible for Marks and Spencer.

North Sea Oil

10. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the latest estimate of recoverable reserves of oil in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea; and how this compares with the estimates over the three previous years.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The latest estimate of remaining recoverable reserves of oil in existing discoveries on the United Kingdom continental shelf is 1,225 million tonnes. The comparable figures for 1982, 1983 and 1984 were 1,475, 1,375 and 1,300 tonnes respectively.

Mr. Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our North sea oil reserves will probably last longer than the most gloomy forecasts have suggested, due to the encouraging rate of discovery and to the better methods of extraction that are being developed? Is this not good news for those who are involved in the United Kingdom's North sea oil industry for the United Kingdom's economy generally?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My hon. Friend is right. The prospects for the industry are very good. It is worth while reflecting upon the fact that after 21 years the rate of discovery in this industry is still one in every five wells drilled. That figure should be thought about by those who criticise the success of this industry.

Mr. Bruce: I echo the Minister's answer, but will he point out to his friends in the City how much potential for investment there is in the North sea and how important it is to United Kingdom industry? Is it not regrettable that, although there is an opportunity for Britain to increase its share of technology by buying into American companies that are in difficulty, such as Combustion Engineering, there have been no British bidders for several months and no United Kingdom money has gone towards increasing its share of the market?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his support of the campaign that I am conducting to increase the competitive share of British firms in the industry. The success of the supply industry is related not just to our market, but to overseas markets. Companies that can build on the technology that we have created out of the North sea will have a very long-term international future. I wish that more companies would respond to the challenge.

Mr. Sayeed: Apart from our oil reserves, the United Kingdom has considerable gas reserves. British Gas is the only customer for the North sea oil and gas that is landed in this country. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that when British Gas is denationalised it will continue to be the permitted customer, or will other customers be permitted to bid?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I said in answer to an earlier question that under the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982 there is scope for competition. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall look at this matter during the course of the legislation.

Mr. Rogers: Is the Minister not misleading the House when he suggests that there are expanding, recoverable reserves in the North sea? Is not the truth that the North sea reserves are on a declining curve? He should not mislead the House with a silly statement such as the one that he just made.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman does not know how to understand the statistics. If he reads in *Hansard* the answer that I gave, he may understand what I was saying. I was saying that the industry's prospects are extremely good. Of course there is a decline in the reserves, because we are using oil. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that we are using oil. In that respect, he may be misleading himself more than anyone else. I hope that he will join those who praise British industry's achievements, rather than decry them.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Accommodation

32. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Lord Privy Seal when he expects to be able to bring forward measures to improve the accommodation for right hon. and hon. Members.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The Services Committee is constantly considering ways of improving the accommodation available for Members; but substantial improvements depend on completion of phase 1 of the new parliamentary building, which is scheduled for 1990.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Leader of the House agree that the working conditions and office space available to Members of Parliament are woefully inadequate, and that an improvement is those working conditions does not represent a gravy train for Members of Parliament, but would enable us to do our jobs better?

Mr. Biffen: The overwhelming majority of hon. Members do a thoroughly effective job within the existing building. I have to say again that there is no likelihood of significant improvement before 1990.

Mr. Stokes: Is there any correlation between the size of an hon. Member's office and the success of his work here?

Mr. Biffen: If there were, I would be top of the league.

Mr. Dormand: Is the Leader of the House resisting the temptation to agree with some of his misguided hon. Friends who say that the Chamber is the only place where hon. Members should be and that therefore there should be no improved accommodation? Is that not nonsense? What is his view?

Mr. Biffen: My view is that there is no immediate prospect of a significant improvement in accommodation, but that the position should be significantly altered once phase 1 is completed in 1990.

Register of Members' Interests

33. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will bring forward proposals to amend the requirements of the Register of Members' Interests so that the actual financial sums and assets are duly disclosed.

Mr. Biffen: I have no such present proposals.

Mr. Winnick: Surely, as it stands, the register's purpose is undermined by the fact that no value is given to the various directorships, consultancies and assets which feature in it. Is the Leader of the House aware—he should be, in my view—that if he looks up the interests of Labour Members who are sponsored by a trade union, he will see that every detail is given down to the last penny?

Mr. Biffen: The register's requirements have been considered by the Select Committee responsible for it. The Select Committee deemed that it would not be appropriate to have the disclosure required by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alton: Why is the Leader of the House opposed to penalties being imposed upon hon. Members who refuse to sign the Register of Interests? Does he believe that there is also an argument that lobbyists should be included on the register?

Mr. Biffen: The first point made by the hon. Gentleman is a matter for the House, not for me. As to his second point, I said to the House in the summer Adjournment debate on 24 July that I thought we might have the chance to consider this matter a little later. Plainly that must now be in the reasonably near future.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Should not these matters, which are of legitimate public interest, be debated? The Leader of the House should give time to the Select Committee report on Members' interests, which was published in July this year and which still has not been debated by the House. Why does not the Leader of the House give us time to debate those matters, because we shall then resolve them on the Floor, to everyone's satisfaction?

Mr. Biffen: I have just said to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) that I had hoped we could be debating the subject of lobbyists, as set out by the Select Committee, in the reasonably near future.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Will the Leader of the House give an assurance that this matter will be debated soon? He gave me an assurance during the debate to which he referred that we would have an early debate. Has the right hon. Gentleman seen the early-day motion referring to the way in which Tory Members swan around the House with Miss World every year? I have tabled an amendment to that motion calling on the hon. Members concerned to give the House the exact figure that they are paid by Mecca for performing this undesirable service.

Mr. Biffen: I have before me the very words that I used in the summer Adjournment debate. They were characteristically cautious, but I am happy to say again that I hope we shall be debating the matter in the near future. It will be a matter for the discretion and generosity of the Chair whether the debate extends to Miss World.

Televised Proceedings

34. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal what representations he has received regarding the feasibility and costs of the possible televising of the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I refer my hon. Friend to last Wednesday's debate on this subject.

Mr. Bruinvels: While welcoming the decision taken on Wednesday, may I refer my right hon. Friend to column 305, where he said that it would be a "leap in the dark" to go ahead with the televising of Parliament? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it was strange for the House to have a debate on the possible televising of Parliament when no one knew the exact cost involved? The only cost given was £25,000 for a 12-week test period in another place. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in the absence of the figues, it was wrong for us to have the debate?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend should not dance on my grave. The figures that he is requesting would have been available if the Select Committee had been able to take evidence.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the sad decision last week has deprived us of the pleasurable opportunity of turning off certain hon. Members?

Mr. Alan Williams: Does the right hon. Gentleman not feel somewhat let down? In the months preceding last week's debate, the Prime Minister gave the impression that she would be leading the troops all the way up to the top of the hill, but in fact she left the Leader of the House there, while she marched all the troops back down again.

Mr. Biffen: That just goes to show that the right hon. Gentleman is not very good at reading smoke signals.

Nutrition

35. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Lord Privy Seal what account is taken in preparing menus in the House of Commons of recent reports on the alleged connection between diet and heart disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: The Catering Sub-Committee has made every effort to provide varied menus; and both low calorie and vegetarian food is available for those hon. Members who require it.

Mr. Greenway: Would not suitable menus provide leaner and fitter hon. Members of all ages? Will my right hon. Friend ask the Catering Sub-Committee to investigate the possibility and desirability of producing such hon. Members and ask it to report back to the House?

Mr. Biffen: That is a responsibility that I shall cheerfully pass to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving).

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Leader of the House aware that I have been eating large amounts of the low calorie food, and it does not seem to be working?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that some hon. Members seem to eat a lot of baloney? Does he also agree that this sort of question is likely to give us all heart attacks, because it is nothing to do with the House of Commons what we all eat, as long as we know what we are eating? It is bad enough having to listen to it, let alone eat it.

Mr. Alton: If the facility is to be of such value to hon. Members, how about extending it to staff in their cafeteria?

ENERGY

Polkemmet Colliery

11. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his consideration of the Cooper committee report to West Lothian district council on Polkemmet colliery, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. David Hunt: I have studied the report to which the hon. Gentleman refers, and my right hon. Friend wrote to West Lothian district council about it on 16 September. Individual pit closures are a matter for the National Coal Board; I understand that the National Union of Mineworkers and NACODS have appealed against the proposed closure of Polkemmet, through the colliery review procedure.

Mr. Dalyell: Is the Minister saying that the report has been studied properly by a deputy secretary, an under-secretary or a senior civil servant?

Mr. Hunt: No. The hon. Gentleman has been given an answer to the question that he posed. I have studied the report. It is for the management of the National Coal Baord to decide whether it is appropriate to consider a report of this nature in the review procedure. I expect that both the trade unions involved in the procedure will be referring to the report in the evidence that they present.

Mr. Eadie: The Minister has told the House that he has studied the report and has done nothing. He has been lecturing the House today on the way in which NCB (Enterprises) Ltd. has been providing jobs, but it is stated in the report that an investment of £15 million would create 700 jobs and that Ravenscraig would be able to take the product of those workers.

Mr. Hunt: I studied the report because the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) asked me to do so. I do not feel that the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) has any right to criticise me for having done somehing that another hon. Member asked me to do. I have said to the House on many occasions that individual pit closures are matters for the management of the National Coal Board, in Scotland or wherever.

CIVIL SERVICE

Equal Opportunity Officers

36. **Mr. Janner** asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether he will now take steps to appoint equal opportunity officers in Government Departments of Afro-Caribbean and Asian origin.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office (Mr. Richard Luce): Equal opportunity officers are designated on the basis of their overall suitability and not on the basis of sex or ethnic origin. As the hon. and learned Member knows, the designation of equal opportunity officers in individual Departments is a matter for Ministers in charge of Departments rather than for me.

Mr. Janner: Does it not strike the Minister as odd that, while every Government Department has an equal opportunities officer, these officers are neither female nor black nor Asian? When it comes to the selection of equal opportunities officers in Government Departments, does he not think that some applicants are just a teeny weeny bit more equal than others?

Mr. Luce: As far as I am aware, there are designated equal opportunities officers in every Government Department. I think that it would be entirely wrong to consider their selection or appointment on any criterion other than their suitability for the job.

Mr. Holt: When my hon. Friend is considering this issue, will he reflect on the fact that many small firms in the furniture industry are being crippled by the effects of equal opportunity legislation? The Equal Opportunities Commission has an almost unlimited amount of finance available to it for legal costs, unlike many small firms. The result is that many small firms are facing bankruptcy, with the result that some members of their work force may become unemployed. The consequences are the same whether we have Afro-Asian officers or anyone else.

Mr. Luce: I note what my hon. Friend says. I am concerned with appointments to the Civil Service, which are based on equality of opportunity. I believe that it is the right principle to pursue.

Secondments

37. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Minister of the Civil Service if he will report progress on implementing Her Majesty's Government's policy of encouraging the secondment of people from industry to the Civil Service and vice versa.

Mr. Luce: The Government continue to encourage the policy of secondments in both directions between the Civil Service and industry.

Mr. Chapman: I am sure that we all wish to maintain the complete political impartiality of the Civil Service, and I recognise that there has been an increase in secondments in recent years, but does my hon. Friend agree that about 100 secondments either way is too low a number when we have almost 600,000 civil servants? Will he make it a Government priority to try to increase the interchange, which I am sure is valuable for both industry and the Civil Service?

Mr. Luce: I agree with my hon. Friend that the maintainence of the political impartiality of the Civil Service is a key to the stability of our political system. My hon. Friend may be right to say that the number of secondments is small, but secondments from the Civil Service to industry and from industry to the Civil Service are increasing. The latest figure available is about 300. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is important that secondments are encouraged.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Is the Minister aware that there will be a general welcome for the increase in secondments? However, does he agree with his hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) that the number is still tiny in relation to the size of the Civil Service? What is the impediment? Is it that there is such disparity in the terms and conditions of service that it is difficult to switch individuals backwards and forwards?

Mr. Luce: There are some obstacles and problems in sparing important civil servants for secondment to industry and, equally, in attracting industrialists for a two-year assignment to the Civil Service. I am examining the problem. As I have said, the number of secondments is rising. The latest figures show that 186 civil servants have gone to industry and that 116 industrialists have come into the Civil Service on secondment. I shall do everything that I can to encourage the process.

Unions (Ministerial Meetings)

38. **Mr. Soley** asked the Minister for the Civil Service when he last met the Civil Service unions; and what was discussed.

Mr. Luce: I have not yet had formal discussions with the Civil Service unions, but I met them informally on 29 October.

Mr. Soley: In view of his answer to the last two questions, will the Minister discuss with the unions the possibility of making it clear in all advertisements that the

Civil Service is an equal opportunities employer? Will he discuss with them the placing of more advertisements in the ethnic minority press? Will he also discuss the possibility of making full-time appointments within the Civil Service to look at this? Finally, will the Minister look at the discrepancy between the number of men and women who are seconded to industry, because the percentage of women is considerably lower?

Mr. Luce: There are many issues that I and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who also carries responsibility for industrial relations in the Civil Service, discuss with the unions. I am glad that the majority of unions give their fullest support to the principle of equality of opportunity. That is right. However, I should point out that a number of ethnic surveys are taking place with regard to recruitment and the general breakdown within the Civil Service. They will take some time to complete. The objective is to ensure that we fulfil the basic principle of equality of opportunity.

Mr. Spencer: Will my hon. Friend encourage the representatives of the Civil Service unions to go to Leicester to see the contribution that the Asian community has made to the free enterprise society and draw their conclusions accordingly?

Mr. Luce: I agree with everything that my hon. and learned Friend has said.

Dr. McDonald: Is the Minister aware that the Government have recently accepted the case put by the Inland Revenue Staff Federation for more staff and that 3,500 extra jobs are now to be created in the Inland Revenue? Is he also aware that the number of recipients of the main social security benefits — unemployment benefit, supplementary allowance and family income supplement—have virtually doubled since 1979 and that the DHSS staff cannot cope with the increased work load? Will he discuss with his ministerial colleagues the possibility of vastly increasing the number of staff in the DHSS to ensure that those in urgent and desperate need receive their money as quickly as possible?

Mr. Luce: The number of staff in the DHSS is principally a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. I should tell the hon. Lady that there are certain sectors, including tax inspectors and some special professional groups, where we are losing good people, and for that reason we have introduced a system of special additions to ensure that recruitment, retention and motivation are right for those people.

Civil Servants (Duties)

39. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what study he has made of comments on Sir Douglas Wass's proposal for the establishment of a Royal Commission to look at questions of civil servants' loyalty, ministerial involvement in appointments and public accountability of officials and an independent appeal procedure for civil servants who consider that Ministers are attempting to mislead Parliament.

Mr. Luce: I have nothing to add to the answers that I gave to the hon. Member's earlier questions on 28 October.

Mr. Dalyell: What should civil servants do when they find that the draft report of an account to Parliament, such as Sir John Nott's last draft account of 4 May 1982, which was basically true, is deliberately altered by Ministers and 10 Downing street, to an account to Parliament that is deceptive and untrue? Is it sufficient to say that they should go along to their superiors? Bluntly, Sir Clive Whitmore and Sir Robert Armstrong would not have seen any civil servant who dared to do so and who risked his career in doing it. If Sir Douglas Wass thinks that that is a serious subject, should not a Minister who honourably gave up his Foreign Office job because of the Falklands episode at least devote a serious amount of thought to a real problem?

Mr. Luce: As usual, the hon. Gentleman has the whole issue quite wrong. We have a system which he understands as fully as anyone. It is a constitutional system, and the heart of that system is that there should be ministerial accountability to the House, not Civil Service accountability. That has taken place in this context. Every Minister is accountable to the House, and every Minister can be scrutinised. I believe that the procedures already clearly laid down by the head of the Home Civil Service and announced by the Prime Minister earlier this year for civil servants who have grievances are perfectly fair and reasonable.

ENERGY

Coal Industry

12. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board; and if he will discuss with him proposed pit closures.

Mr. Peter Walker: Individual pit closures are matters for the management of the National Coal Board. However, I meet the chairman of the NCB frequently to discuss all aspects of the coal industry. Last Friday I met him to announce the extension of the coal conversion scheme, which I hope will bring great benefit to the industry over the next two years.

Mr. Boyes: When the Secretary of State next meets the chairman of the NCB on that matter, will he make sure that the chief executive of National Coal Board (Enterprise) Ltd. is present, because it is no good closing pits such as Herrington in my contituency and then sending in NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.? We want the jobs to be created in good time. My constituency has 30 per cent. unemployment. Where will the jobs come from for the sons and daughters of miners, even if the miners can get alternative jobs? Where will the youth get jobs? In an earlier answer I was told that 500 jobs a month were being created. Does that mean that I shall get 1,500 jobs in the next three months?

Mr. Walker: I have met, not just the chairman of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., but the whole board of that company. This afternoon what I have found surprising is the sour grapes from Opposition Members at the success of the enterprise company.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Weights and Measures Act 1963 (Various Foods) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Specified Diseases) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of the Elderly in Wales, being a matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That the matter of the Health Service in Scotland, being a matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Lang.]*

Prime Minister (Brussels Meeting)

3.32 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder whether you have given any consideration to the status of the meeting that took place the other day between the Prime Minister and President Reagan, because if it could be construed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Although I have many responsibilities, I am certainly not responsible for meetings that may take place between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States. I do not think that I can rule on that.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I was not asking whether the matter fell within the area of your responsibilities, Mr. Speaker, but whether you had considered it and would consider my point of order in the light of that.

Mr. Speaker: I have not even thought about it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It must be different.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: You said that you had not considered these matters. Is it in order for me to ask you whether you have been approached by the Prime Minister's Office with a view to the right hon. Lady making a statement about her meeting in Brussels last week with Mr. Reagan, because the House would wish to question her on those matters?

Mr. Speaker: That is a different matter. I have not been approached.

Orders of the Day

Agriculture Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call upon the Minister to move the Second Reading of the Bill, I must announce that I have selected the amendment in the names of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and his right hon. and hon. Friends.

3.33 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): I wonder whether I might begin my speech, Mr. Speaker, with the happy task of wishing you a happy birthday. I have never thought of you as an old-age pensioner, and I do not think that I ever shall.

I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill seeks to reinforce the partnership between the Government and the agriculture industry, which we in the Conservative party have always sought to develop. It represents a further step in the development of our agricultural policies.

For many years, Governments of all parties have provided a range of regulatory, advisory and research services to the farming industry. In more recent times, and bearing particularly in mind the increasing problem of over-production within Europe, we have encouraged the farming industry to respond more than before to the needs of the market. The creation of Food from Britain and of a strengthened framework for establishing research and development priorities in agriculture have been major steps that the Government have taken towards that end. The Bill further develops those policies.

Similarly, the Government have sought in many ways over recent years to encourage the farming industry to develop a new approach to the environment. I am glad to be able to record that the industry has in all but a tiny minority of cases responded positively to the initiatives that my Ministry has taken, often in co-operation with others, to protect the environment. The rapid development of farming and wildlife advisory groups and the Broads experimental scheme are but two examples of that trend.

Building on the voluntary approach, we shall under the Bill be able to designate certain parts of the country as environmentally sensitive areas and in such areas offer to farmers agreements aimed at conserving, enhancing or protecting the environment. The Bill is structured, not to coerce the industry, but to provide a framework within which the industry can voluntarily influence in new ways the provision of advisory, research and marketing services and respond to the needs of the environment.

The need for Government advisory services to respond more closely to the needs of the industry was a recurring theme in the report of the then new director general of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, which I accepted a year ago, in November 1984.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Clause 9 is welcome to many of us, but how much money will be available to implement it?

Mr. Jopling: I shall come back to the detail of this later in my speech, but, speaking off the top of my head, I think

[Mr. Jopling]

that around £5 million or £6 million has been set aside to begin with. If my head deceives me, I shall correct that later if the hon. Gentleman will allow me.

Seeking a more positive approach to ADAS activities, the new director general of ADAS argued that ADAS's approach should be based on what the customer wants. If ADAS is to provide the services that the industry wants efficiently and economically, it needs clear signals from the industry. What farmers and growers and others are prepared to pay for is the clearest possible signal. However, I must make it clear at this stage that I do not plan to charge for the kind of advice now given to farmers on conservation, rural diversification or animal welfare matters.

It was against that background that we invited comments in July on ideas about charging for a range of services, including not only advice but some of the other services to which ADAS contributes. Those functions benefit the recipients, even where they also involve legal obligations. As I announced on 7 November, I believe it right in principle to introduce charges in those cases also.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. I apologise for interrupting him so early, but it is important. Is he really saying that, since many of those legal obligations will involve the protection of the food chain and those who are dealing with communicable diseases, such as brucellosis, all that matters is that because they are legal undertakings it will be in the farmers' interests to pay for those services? Surely it is a two-way traffic?

Mr. Jopling: I am afraid that the hon. Lady has not been able to see some of the press notices which my Department has put out lately. She has obviously missed the point that it is not my intention to charge for the testing of brucellosis and tuberculosis, on which great importance was put by many of those whom we consulted. I have told the House that before.

The same approach applies to research and development. In this area we are inviting the industry, by whatever means each sector of the industry considers appropriate, to commission research and development.

The Government will still fund a large proportion of research and development work relevant to agriculture and food, through the science budget, through specific commissions from the Agriculture Departments to the Agricultural and Food Research Council and other research contractors, and within ADAS. Even after the changes have been made, total spending on agriculture and food research will be nearly £200 million in 1987-88. This money must be concentrated increasingly in areas which only the Government can fund.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): The right hon. Gentleman has said that his Department does not intend to stop brucellosis research, because of legal obligations and because it is necessary. How can he reconcile that with telling me that he intends to close the laboratory in my constituency which last year conducted over 800 brucellosis tests? Is not that closure inconsistent with his comments today?

Mr. Jopling: The closing of that establishment follows an efficiency survey by the Government. The tests will be done elsewhere. I know that the hon. Gentleman is defending his constituency, but the Government have a responsibility to ensure that such work is carried out as efficiently as possible. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is worried because of the impact on his constituency, but we took the decision in the interest of efficiency.

We believe that the industry recognises the value of research and development and that it will take up the challenge of helping to ensure that research services respond to the genuine needs of the industry. I stress that we are not looking to the industry to fund each and every project from which the Government have decided to withdraw.

In May I said that I saw advantage in making it possible for each sector of the industry to contribute to research and development, either voluntarily or by means of sectoral levies operated by the appropriate statutory bodies. Discussions on the details are still underway.

In the sugar sector, the Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee has for many years operated smoothly to provide industry funds for relevant research work. We have had many debates in the House on that. In that sector, and in the milk sector, no new powers are needed to operate sectoral levy systems.

For cereals and livestock, we have included in the Bill changes in the constitutional arrangements of the Home Grown Cereals Authority and of the Meat and Livestock Commission which will enable each of those bodies, if the relevant sector wishes, to raise additional levy funds for research and development purposes and to decide how any such funds should be spent.

The Bill will also make it possible, should it be the preferred option of the oilseeds and protein crops sectors, for that part of the industry to come under the wing of the Home Grown Cereals Authority.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Given the controversy about straw and stubble burning, it is vital that considerable resources continue to be provided for new processes. The industry is worried that the Home Grown Cereals Authority might have to meet research costs out of the levies envisaged in clause 5. Can my right hon. Friend reassure the industry about that and confirm that it will be more closely involved in the authority?

Mr. Jopling: Yes. Provision is made for that in clauses 4 to 6. We are discussing changing the authority's size to deal with my hon. Friend's anxiety.

Dealing next with horticulture, the representatives of the industry have, I am pleased to say, already shown themselves prepared to make a substantial contribution to research and development in this sector. In the absence of an existing body to collect and disburse funds, it would be possible to set up a horticultural development council for the purpose under the Industrial Organisation and Development Act 1947. In response to a request from the National Farmers Union I shall be instituting a poll of the industry early in the new year to determine the degree of support. If the vote is in favour, I shall lay a statutory instrument for affirmative resolution by both Houses before the summer recess, so that the new arrangement could take effect in 1987-88.

Today I am announcing my decision to accept the recommendation of my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Peyton to abolish the Eggs Authority. At an appropriate stage I shall bring forward a Government amendment to

the Bill to implement that decision. After the abolition of the Eggs Authority that sector may prefer voluntary arrangements, but I have also made it clear that I would be prepared to consider the creation of an industrial development council for eggs if producers favour raising levies to fund appropriate research and development.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): As the Secretary of State is making announcements, will he say when an announcement is to be made about aid to farmers in the west of Scotland, who have been adversely affected by this summer's weather? The right hon. Gentleman will know that a delegation of Ayrshire Members of Parliament met the Minister of State, Scottish Office earlier this month. We were told that the announcement had been delayed because the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was overseas. He has manifestly returned, so may we be told whether the announcement is to be made later in his speech, at some point during the debate, before the end of the month, or before the end of the year? The situation is desperate.

Mr. Jopling: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was in his place on Thursday when I answered ——

Mr. Foulkes: Yes, I was.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman will therefore recall that I then said that we hoped to make an announcement very shortly——

Mr. Foulkes: This is very shortly.

Mr. Jopling: I quite understand the urgency of the matter. However, I must make it clear that I shall not be making an announcement today, as it is obviously not relevant to the details of the Bill. I shall try to pacify the hon. Gentleman by saying that I have taken on board his point. I know how urgent the issue is, and I shall make an announcement as soon as I can.

When my right hon. Friend who is now the Secretary of State for Energy set up Food from Britain, he announced that the Government would provide initial funding for five years but looked to the industry to come forward with longer-term financial assistance. Food from Britain has made an excellent start and I am delighted that both the farmers unions and the Food and Drink Federation are supporting its continuation.

I was therefore pleased to announce that when the Government's initial pump-priming funds of £14 million ran out in 1987-88, additional funds of up to £2·5 million annually for a further three years would be made available to FFB, provided that industry support was also at a sufficient level. If the relevant sectors wish to provide funds through sectorial levies, the mechanisms that I mentioned earlier in relation to research — including those in the Bill—could also be brought into play for that purpose.

Both on research and development and marketing, the approach that we are adopting is a voluntary one. We are not requiring any sector to contribute. It is for them to decide, but I hope and believe that most sectors will contribute to both, and in my view it would be in their interest to do so.

I shall now outline the various specific features of the Bill. Clause 1 deals with advisory and related services. Existing legislation is complicated and, to some extent, divergent. Different kinds of advice must be provided to different categories of persons. Some is free, but, of course, some is not. I therefore concluded that we should take the opportunity of simplifying the current powers, adopting a uniform category of persons eligible to receive advice and providing a greater degree of flexibility to enable ADAS to respond efficiently to the changing needs of both industry and the market.

The Bill will replace those existing measures with a single, straightforward authority to maintain an appropriate advisory organisation and to provide services —including advice—and goods relating to agricultural matters, including conservation and diversification.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): My right hon. Friend is explaining the effects of clause 1, and I do not object to them. However, he said earlier that research and development should be aimed at meeting the genuine needs of industry. Some of us are concerned that there will not be sufficient basic research into the future uses and needs of industry. I am thinking especially of research into alternative uses of agricultural products. I am worried that there will not be sufficient money to pay for that aspect.

Mr. Jopling: I understand what my hon. Friend is saying. He must appreciate that it was entirely to deal with such matters that I set up the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food, under Sir Kenneth Durham, about a year ago, and following the report of the Select Committee. We wanted a much better direction for agricltural research at a very high-powered level. I am not sure whether my hon. Friend was a member of that Committee——

Mr. Morrison: No.

Mr. Jopling: It was very much in response to the report of the Select Committee that I felt that we had to ensure that agricultural research was directed towards the greatest priorities.

The amount of money that the Government will be spending on agriculture and food research, even after the changes have been made in 1987-88, will still amount to £200 million, which is a great deal of money. That should allay my hon. Friend's fears.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I understand what the right hon. Gentleman is saying about research and wanting it to proceed in the right direction. Why did he, therefore, decide to cut £16·5 million off the budget without waiting for the report?

Mr. Jopling: That question is simply to answer. We wanted to make adjustments in 1986-87, and we have done so. We consulted the priorities board for advice on those changes, which were then endorsed and accepted by the board.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy) *rose*——

Mr. Jopling: I really must continue. I have already given way twice, having uttered hardly a word of my speech.

Clause 2 will make it possible for the cost of enforcing seeds regulations to be taken into account when fees are set to recoup the cost of official seed certification services. Such certification is the buyer's guarantee of quality seed. All the costs that we incur in certifying seeds have always been recovered in full. The important task of enforcing the

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marketing rules adds rather more than 10 per cent. of the cost of certification, and that expenditure, too, should be recovered.

Clause 3 deals with the powers that I am seeking to charge for certain plant health work. Producers already make a contribution to the cost of plant health work—which benefits the environment as well as the farming industry — by taking their own preventative measures and by bearing the costs when a pest or disease is found and a crop has to be destroyed.

There are, however, two areas of plant health work where we are providing services which are of clear benefit to growers and others. Accordingly, clause 3 seeks to amend the Plant Health Act 1967 by inserting a new clause which gives the power to set fees and charges to pay for export certification and import licensing work.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My right hon. Friend dealt with the setting fees under the first three clauses without saying what control the House would have over the levels of fees that he sets. Before going further, will he say in each case, as he comes to each clause, what control the House will have? The legislation is all by reference to other measures, and one cannot, by looking at the face of the Bill, answer that question.

Mr. Jopling: In general, many of the levels of fees will be set by statutory instrument, as it is not possible to set fees in primary legislation. *[Interruption.]* I recall that when Labour Members were in power and we were discussing fees for various matters it was agreed that the size of fees could not be put in primary legislation. This is the customary way of dealing with these matters, partly because the fees change from year to year, and partly because we cannot have primary legislation of this type each year.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Where in clause 1 does it say that the charges will be set by statutory instrument? As I read the provision, it is to be done arbitrarily, without the control of the House.

Mr. Jopling: I was careful not to say that all fees would be set that way. The advisory services will be organised on exactly the same basis as the existing fees are set. They are set at a fair level, and I am not aware that this has given rise to difficulty in the past or that the way in which ADAS has been able to charge fees has caused serious difficulties.

Clauses 4, 5 and 6 amend the Cereals Marketing Act 1965, which established the Home Grown Cereals Authority and gave the authority the role of improving the marketing of home grown cereals. Incidentally, the Second Reading of that measure on 22 December 1964 gave me and my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) the opportunity of making our maiden speeches. Sadly, my hon. Friend is prevented by illness from being here today. I am sure that the whole House joins me in sending him good wishes for a speedy return to his duties with us.

Since the United Kingdom's entry into the Community, the role of the Home Grown Cereals Authority has centred on the specialist areas of market intelligence and financial support for certain low-budget research projects funded by a small levy on firsthand sales of home grown cereals. The authority also provides an agency service to the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce for the operation of the intervention system.

The changes embodied in clauses 4 to 6 are designed to make it possible for the authority to play a wider role in research and development and promotion, if that is what the industry wants. There is also provision for the coverage of the authority to be extended by order to certain other arable crops, if the sectors concerned wish to provide industry funds through the Home Grown Cereals Authority, and I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) that the Bill also provides for a new flexibility as to the numbers of members of the authority, while preserving a balance between the representation of growers, dealers and processors.

Clause 7 amends the constitution and levy-raising powers of the Meat and Livestock Commission in two ways. The most important change is the introduction of new flexibility into the commission's levy-raising powers. The main purpose is to enable the commission to implement the plans developed by the industry to raise new funds from livestock producers specifically for the theme and species promotion of meat. I am pleased to be able to bring forward the necessary amendments in this Bill.

The new flexibility will also enable the MLC to collect contributions from the livestock and meat sectors for research and development and Food from Britain, if the industry decides that that is both desirable and appropriate. Clause 7 will increase the maximum membership of the commission from 10 to 11, to give us extra flexibility in appointing commissioners with the very wide range of experience appropriate to the work of the MLC.

Clause 8 provides for certain amendments to be made to the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983 which set up Food from Britain. In the expectation that industry will take on a greater share of the financing of Food from Britain, it may be appropriate for Minsters to draw on a wider cross-section of interests in appointing members to that body's council. Clause 8 therefore provides for the maximum size of the council to be increased from 15 to 21 in due course. When the Government contribute a significantly smaller proportion, it would also be right to relax, at an appropriate time in the future, the present statutory constraints on Food from Britain payments to members and staff, while at the same time ensuring that public funds are properly protected.

Clause 9 for me represents the latest stage of an initiative that I launched in the European Community more than a year ago. In brief, I persuaded the Community to strengthen its recognition of the vital relationship between agriculture and the environment. Our efforts bore fruits in the farm structures regulation agreed by the Council of Ministers in March of this year. Article 19 of that regulation permits members states to afford new protection to areas of national environmental importance. Clause 9 will empower the Government to implement this major development.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): My right hon. Friend will know that the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was followed by a number of disagreeable misunderstandings between farmers and environmentalists on the Somerset Levels and other matters. It has taken many years to repair that damage. Will my right hon.

Friend assure the House that, to prevent that from happening again, those who use the land will be extensively consulted before an environmentally sensitive area is designated? The Bill is silent on that point.

Mr. Jopling: I agree with my hon. Friend. I hope that everyone has learnt a good deal from the disagreements about the Somerset Levels. My Department has learnt a good deal. My advisory staff have played an important role during the past few years in mending the fences broken during that period.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the intervention by the hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) justifies the suggestion that it would be highly desirable to recognise that, if rumour is right and the right hon. Gentleman is to select only five or six areas, when a much larger number may require the same treatment, he will cause the degree of misunderstanding and discord to which his hon. Friend referred?

Mr. Jopling: All I can say is that this is a new scheme. For the first time we are embarking on a move to get the European Community to recognise something which many hon. Members—the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) is a distinguished member of that band—have recognised for a long time. I hope that, having got this far, I shall not be criticised for starting warily at the beginning. It would be a great mistake to start with a huge number of new areas. We should go gently to begin with and see how it works, lest we fall into the sort of difficulties to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat - Amory) drew attention.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of clarification——

Mr. Jopling: I have given way once already to the hon. Gentleman. I must continue, because many hon. Members——

Mr. Dalyell: It is on a point of clarification.

Mr. Jopling: If the hon. Gentleman insists, I shall give way.

Mr. Dalyell: Why did the parliamentary draftsmen insert the phrase

"unless the Treasury have consented to the making of the order?"

It is unusual for that phrase to appear in a Bill. What exactly is the crucial role, as always, of the Treasury? Why is this unusual phrase in the Bill?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman has been in the House for too long to make such an innocent-sounding intervention. He knows that it is not unusual for the Treasury to be concerned with these matters. He has been here long enough to know that Ministers do little in life without the Treasury's consent. My hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is sitting beside me, and, in those circumstances, I must be careful about what I say.

Clause 9 authorises the Government to designate environmentally sensitive areas and to draw up contracts with farmers in those areas which would offer payments to those farmers who follow farming practices which respect the environmental needs of their area. The clause has been widely drafted so as to provide the flexibility needed to protect the diverse landscape, wildlife and other features of our countryside.

Most farmers are willing custodians of the beauty and welfare of the countryside. They look to the Government for advice and encouragement in the best ways of pursuing this important role. Clause 9 will provide that advice and encouragement in important areas of the country where uncontrolled agricultural change could put at risk our rural heritage. The theme of the clause is a partnership between the Government and the farmers. That partnership will embrace the statutory conservation bodies and, in England, the Secretary of State for the Environment. I greatly value this visible sign of the shared interests of myself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is clear evidence of the importance that my Department attaches to the responsible development of farming in the wider community.

Under the terms of the Community's regulation, environmentally sensitive areas will have to be approved in Brussels. Farmers within an area will then be encouraged to enter a standard agreement. This will offer the farmer a payment, in return for following beneficial practices.

Mr. D. E. Thomas *rose*——

Mr. Jopling: Clauses 10 and 11 are financial and supplemental, setting the Bill into the normal framework of public finance, and making provision for commencement, consequential amendments and repeals, and its application in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

I am sure that we shall hear critical voices. The opposition spokesman — the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John)—was reported as worrying that the industry might not actually contribute to the work of ADAS or the research services on the scale that the Government hoped to see. He said that we would have to cut and cut again as a result. Then *Farming News* claimed last week, quite falsely, that I am already considering further cuts. Why do they so lack confidence? I believe in the agriculture industry. I am sure that, given a continuing partnership, the industry can and will rise to the challenges that it faces, just as it has risen to the challenges of changing circumstances over the decades.

Mr. D. E. Thomas *rose*——

Mr. Jopling: I expect that we shall also hear those who argue that the industry needs to be dragooned into respecting the environment and that more bureaucratic controls are the answer. We shall be told that our policies do not go far enough I reject that. I have confidence in the industry's respect for the environment. The countryside of this country as we see it has been created largely by the activities of farmers over the centuries. Farmers have responded and are responding to the needs of the environment. With a little help from the Government, the industry can make an even larger contribution to the sort of environment which you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I and the people of this country, want to see around them.

In recent months, many people in the industry have told me how much they value the work of my advisory staff and of research scientists. Both have contributed greatly to the enormous strides which the agriculture industry has taken since the second world war. They are successful services, which farmers value and want to keep. That is their strength and the best guarantee of their future. I have confidence in their future. Of course, like the industry itself, the research and advisory services must adapt to changing circumstances and ensure that their knowledge

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and expertise is directed where it will be of most benefit. The Bill provides a framework for this purpose, and I commend it to the House.

4.10 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): When candidates are being sought for political "Mary Poppins" the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food does not obviously spring to mind. However, in this curiously assembled Bill he shows himself to be a thorough apostle of the song:

"Just a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down".

In this Bill he has included a series of measures which the Opposition emphatically dislike but he has also included clause 9, which is the key to future development, which a number of hon. Members have worked so hard to achieve. Therefore the Opposition do not wish to be seen, however indirectly, to be voting against that key clause.

That is why the alliance amendment is a fundamental error. It does not mention clause 9. To that extent it throws out the baby with the bath water, although the alliance has the great advantage of being able to ask Mr. Des Wilson to explain its attitude towards that clause to the environmental groups that have expressed approval.

We shall not vote against the Bill on Second Reading, but I promise the Minister that wherever clause 1 can be separated from the rest of the clauses—in Committee and on Report—we shall subject them to the greatest possible attack, to the closest scrutiny and to the most searching debate.

Since it is the key to our attitude towards the Bill, may I begin by welcoming clause 9. However, it makes immediately possible only the designation of five or six sites as environmentally sensitive areas. In this part of the structures agreement the Government have secured the principle that grants can be paid for reasons other than the maximisation of production. It ensures that farmers who, in the interests of securing the common heritage of the countryside, have to modify their farming practices can be compensated. That is important not only for the farming industry but for the whole community.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Government deserve credit for giving a lead to Europe? We have to work within the context of the European Community. This Government fought for the principle that grants can be used for conserving the countryside, and they won their case in Europe.

Mr. John: I had hoped that I had come as near to congratulating the Government as the hon. Gentleman could expect me to come. The Government reflected faithfully the views on all sides of the House. That is considerably in advance of the views of many European Community countries. The Bill provides a structure upon which much more can be based, but many hon. Members want that to be achieved as quickly as possible. Therefore I want to ask the Minister of State who is to wind up a number of questions without the answers to which fine feathers will be unable to make fine birds. First, will only £6 million be devoted to environmentally sensitive areas in the first year? During the lifetime of this Government capital grants amounting to £75 million have been taken away from farmers. Capital grants should be given to farmers on environmental criteria. What the Government have given in pence on the one had they have taken away in pounds on the other. I hope that the Minister of State will also be able to say what the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was unable to say: that in subsequent discussions in the European Community on the environmental structure this Government will press for European Community money so that the inadequate sum of £6 million can be augmented by European Community funds for the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

Secondly, may I press the Minister of State to tell us when the sums of money will be payable? Will they be paid quickly? I was dismayed to read in *Big Farm Weekly* that 1987 is the earliest date by which it is expected that payments will be made under this agreement and that the five or six sites will not be chosen until December 1986. Cannot this payment be accelerated? As soon as we have decided in favour of these areas, as we shall when the Bill is passed, we ought to press on with them as soon as possible.

Thirdly, are the five or six sites the limit of the Government's ambition? I was not reassured by the Minister's answers. He referred to going slowly. I understand the need for initial caution, but we shall not be satisfied with only five or six sites. The Countryside Commission has already identified 46 sites in England and Wales alone which meet the criteria. Its Scottish counterpart has identified 17 other sites. If the Bill is to be of anything other than cosmetic value it is imperative that the original list of five or six sites should be increased as quickly as possible. At the risk of seeming to hint at impoliteness towards the Financial Secretary, who is the "minder" of clause 9, I must point out that there are churlish people who doubt the devotion of the Treasury towards expenditure for this purpose. The only way in which that doubt can be silenced is by announcing a programme of further works. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said when he intervened, subsection (2) of clause 9 contains a provision that is almost unparalleled. Hon. Members accept that the Treasury has to license the spending Departments, but what is so novel and sinister and why even a smiling and genial Financial Secretary has to be feared is that a power of veto is to be given to the Treasury over environmentally sensitive areas. This is without precedent and is potentially sinister.

As for the practicalities of the scheme, will the amounts payable to farmers and institutions be realistic? Will they provide incentives? How will ESAs work in practice? What staff will be available? About 100 farmers and institutions are involved in the Halvergate marshes scheme, but there are only two full-time staff. Is that the kind of staffing level that can be expected in environmentally sensitive areas? Will the Nature Conservancy Council or the Countryside Commission be consulted over the management package? Who will act for the Minister? As for monitoring the scheme, will it be an Agricultural Development and Advisory Service scheme or, in deference to clause 1, will the monitoring be privatised, too? The Opposition welcome clause 9 but expect many more details from the Government on Second Reading and in Committee before we shall say that our welcome is unqualified.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Before my hon. Friend leaves clause 9, will he comment on the practice, which will be enshrined in the Bill, whereby the Ministry of

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will continue to pay production grants to farmers who are operating within ESAs? Does my hon. Friend agree that it is inconsistent for the Government to say that they will pay grants to encourage environmentally good practices but continue to pay grants not only to farmers but to the Forestry Commission and others for projects which will be environmentally disastrous?

Mr. John: I was about to deal with the points raised by my hon. Friend. He is right. On a number of points in the Bill, the Government seem to be willing the means without having any clear idea what the ends will be. In clause 9 the Government have no genuine overview as yet about the environmental dimension of agriculture and forestry. Therefore, anomalous practices remain and the Opposition would expect the Government to exclude and eliminate them in Committee.

In dealing with the fairly neutral parts of the Bill I refer now to clause 7, which deals with the membership of the Meat and Livestock Commission. That membership is increased by one, ostensibly, according to the notes, to allow more sectors to be represented on the commission. However, since the present commission is equally representative of producers and traders, I wonder which side will be favoured? Unfortunately, the Opposition do not know and neither do the Government, because—if the Library note is correct, as it generally is — the Government are still negotiating. That is another example of the Government's willing the means by an extension of the commission, without having any clear idea of why they want that extension.

Clauses 4 to 6 reduce the potential size of the Home Grown Cereals Authority, and that was the subject of an intervention by the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). The Government are following the suggestions of that authority but I wonder whether, in practice, there will be any significant difference in its size. As the Minister acknowledged, the Bill adds a large number of extra powers to the authority's remit. Where that happens it is dangerous—perhaps that is too strong a word; certainly undesirable—for more powers to be controlled by a smaller board. I hope that the Minister of State will confirm when he replies that in practice the number of representatives on the Home Grown Cereals Authority will be at the upper end of the scale provided.

Having passed from forward gear to neutral, we now come to reverse gear. The positive parts of the Bill throw into reverse most of the advances made in agriculture and agricultural research and advice in the past 40 years. I should like to remind the Minister of something that he glossed over in his opening speech—the fact that what was a duty has now become a permissive power. That is a worrying trend. The Minister said that we are striking up a partnership between the nation and the Government when he was talking about clause 9. As my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said, he could not have been thinking of clause 1, because in that clause the Government are taking away that partnership. The Government are removing state funding of agricultural advice and development and are creating a statutory framework which is much less desirable than the one that has served us so well since the war.

The Bell committee report states in paragraph 31 that farmers and growers may be expected to have even greater need of expert advice of the kind that ADAS is well equipped to provide. We know that farming is no longer interested in maximum production and that the period of adjustment from producing more and more to controlling what and how much we produce, will be a painful one for many farmers and particularly for small producers.

The financial remit and structure of ADAS should not be changed but it should be set different objectives when it provides advice. That would avoid one of the worst features of clause 1—the danger that the very people who need agricultural advice most will be those who are least likely to be able to afford it under a charging structure. The Minister lamely, if not openly, admitted that the real reason for clause 1 is the a priori objective of saving £16·5 million from the public expenditure budget. That might seem a sizeable sum, but it should be considered against two figures. In the "Play School" economics which were called the autumn economic statement, we were told that the total value of the Government's budget this year is £134 billion. The sum of £16·5 million which is being saved by the Bill is less than one-eightieth of 1 per cent. of the total Government budget. That is hardly the magic ingredient that will lead to the long-promised tax cuts that we have all expected for so long.

Mr. Thomas Torney (Bradford, South): The Government will get the money for that from the sale of British Gas.

Mr. John: That autumn economic statement revealed that the intervention body last year spent £1,900 million and the rise in its spending this year is £450 million. The sum to be saved by the Bill is dwarfed more than 25 times over by the increase in spending by the intervention body. That is truly the economics of the madhouse and that is wholly undesirable.

Mr. John Watson (Skipton and Ripon): Is the hon. Member aware that since the autumn economic statement there have been 14 major speeches from the Opposition Front Bench, that in every one there has been a pledge to increase public expenditure and that each one has been justified on the ground that such an increase represented only a tiny proportion of the sum involved in the autumn economic statement?

Mr. John: The hon. Gentleman should go into agricultural constituencies and justify the mutilation of ADAS. Less than one-eightieth of 1 per cent. of the total Government budget is allocated to a body that is necessary to this country's farming health and food health which has been built up over 40 years. He should explain why that is being jeopardised in pursuit of monetary objectives. It is no wonder that the farming press is so unkind to the Minister when he has friends like the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson). The hon. Member really ought to think before he rises. *[Interruption.]* I understand that the Oxford Union has just woken up but the Minister of State appears to be going back to sleep again now. My points were acceptable to all hon. Members except the Secretary of State for Wales. However, as the Opposition know from Welsh history, the Secretary of State for Wales is a slow learner.

Will the Minister tell us the details of the charging structure? We are being asked to vote for a pig in a poke tonight. We have no idea what the charges are, but we have a clear idea that no parliamentary control or scrutiny will be imposed upon those charges.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I understand the hon. Gentleman's point about small farmers. Does he agree that at least some assurance should be given to those small farmers who—I accept the point that he makes—will be hardest hit, that the charges will be based on acreage rather than any other factor?

Mr. John: The debate should be based upon information. Here, the legislation is the meat in the sandwich. There have been consultations before today and there will be consultations after today. Today, we have to pass the Bill in complete ignorance of the final structure that the Minister will impose. We do not know whether he will listen to the second round of consultation and whether, as the hon. Gentleman said, he will exempt or lessen the burden upon small farmers. It is not so much giving the Government a blank cheque as giving them a blank certified cheque. They can cash whatever the House gives them. When we can isolate this clause in Committee, my hon. Friends and I hope to emasculate it completely. It is a thoroughly undesirable piece of legislation.

As the Minister said, there are two prime considerations to which the House should devote itself. The first relates to the amount of the charges. We do not know how much hardship is involved until we know the amount of the charges. Secondly, we should have something other than the halting and enfeebled explanation of the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food about what he proposes to do with regard to the House when the second round of consultations is complete. At the moment, there is no provision for Parliament to consider those charges. The Government can impose them without a statutory instrument, a statement in the House or any parliamentary control. That is treating the House and the farming community with contempt. In Committee, the Government must alter the ill-considered drafting of that clause.

We are ill prepared to consider the charges, but I believe that ADAS is scarcely more prepared to impose them. Even after the Minister's speech, we have no details of how the hoped-for income of over £5 million is to be achieved by a service which has not yet had to charge. No training has yet been given to any member of ADAS in preparation for that charging role. There is no mechanism for collecting the statutory charges at the moment.

Does the Minister know how the scheme will work? What damage is likely to be inflicted? The hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon, who is now leaving the Chamber, intervened movingly about the great feat of saving £16·5 million. First, severe damage will be caused to the morale of the ADAS staff, although I do not suppose that loyalty rings any cash registers with this money-obsessed Government. The Government admit to 380 redundancies but the Institution of Professional Civil Servants calculates that with the closure of some of the research functions and stations there will be over 800 redundancies by 1987. That is a cut of 15 per cent.

If that were coming from a completely cold start, it would be bad enough, but it comes at the end of five years during which the total ADAS staff has already been cut by 12 per cent., and the front-line advisers have been cut by no less than 14 per cent. If, the base date is put back a year to 1981, there has been a manpower cut of 18 per cent. There has been a cut of 18 per cent. over five years and there will be a further cut of 15 per cent. in the period up to 1987.

Those cuts will mean that significant teams of agricultural experts are being dispersed and the quality of service available to agriculture will be made immeasurably worse because farmers will be unable to afford the service and ADAS will be unable to provide services which have hitherto been provided.

Let no one be under any misapprehension. That is not merely a cosy or even a contractual relationship between agriculture and the Government. Everyone in the country has as large a stake in the nature and quality of advice given to farmers as farmers themselves. We believe that because we are all consumers and because the history of British food health is a proud one.

The independent, impartial and comprehensive nature of the advice which ADAS has given has been valued. The smaller service ADAS now envisages will mean that much of its time will be distracted by the need to market, and collect charges. If, as I expect—the Minister disagreed with me but did not justify his disagreement — the income which it is hoped to obtain by charges is not achieved, the cuts will have to go deeper. There will have to be even more redundancies at ADAS and an even more sketchy service will be provided with fewer visits and less advice. Anyone who is not obsessed with monetarist goals will conclude that the proposal does not make sense. The damage being inflicted is out of all proportion to the tiny sum being saved.

The key to British agriculture's post-war success has been a partnership. The Minister was correct when he referred to that partnership between the nation and agriculture in relation to clause 9, but what applies to clause 9 applies equally to clause 1. To abandon that partnership because of a blind hatred of public expenditure means abandoning the reconstruction of agriculture.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): The hon. Gentleman has rightly spoken of the partnership that has existed for many years. Does he also accept that as we move into a time of structural surpluses people are worried about the volumes of money that are being invested in the production of goods that are already in surplus?

Mr. John: I appreciate the point the hon. Gentleman has made. I tried to deal with that matter earlier. In an era of transition, there may be a need for advice on how to produce differently, but the amount of advice needed will be hardly any less. Agriculture is moving through an era of profound change. The Minister is hazarding the safe navigation of that period of change. We believe that action to be completely unjustified.

The Labour party gives notice that, if returned to government, it would not persist with these charges, and would undertake a major restructuring of ADAS and research and development so that it would be able to fulfil more sensitively the long-term needs of agriculture and the nation. We should also recognise the importance and dedication of those undertaking the tasks whom this heedless Government are bidding fair to destroy.

4.37 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I beg to move,

That this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which provides the means seriously to cut the Agricultural Development and Advisory Services (ADAS), and to force an agriculture industry in which there are already increasing financial problems to pay an extra £11 million for advisory

approval and inspection work, and which will seriously damage long-term agricultural development by reducing funds for Government-backed independent agricultural research.

Right hon. and hon. Members will see that the amendment is in the names of my right hon. Friends the Members for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Where are they?

Mr. Maclennan: Where is the Prime Minister?

The Bill, as is often the case, is an agricultural miscellaneous provisions Bill, and it is good in parts, but most of its clauses are so seriously defective that it is inappropriate for the House to give it a Second Reading.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) has formed the judgment that, because he thinks that there is much that is good in clause 9, he and his hon. Friends can overlook the deficiencies of the first eight clauses and give it a vote of approval in principle. Members of the alliance regard the Bill as bad in principle.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Where are they?

Mr. Maclennan: They do not therefore regard it as appropriate to give the Bill a Second Reading.

Clause 9 gives effect to a desirable regulation. The Government are required to give effect to it. The regulation, issued on 31 March, is automatically effective in Britain, although it does not provide for Community spending. The clause has been introduced to enable the Minister to spend. That little exercise could have been done without delaying the House for long and would still have enjoyed the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Similar support cannot be given to the rest of the Bill.

Before I discuss the controversial parts of the Bill, I welcome clause 9, which implements article 19 of regulation EC 797/85. It is welcome that moneys may be made available, although the Minister was coy about revealing the amount, to environmentally sensitive areas. He said so little that if we had to rely on his comments alone, perhaps we should need a further delay to enable the Minister to decide what the Government intend to do under the enabling provision.

In answer to an intervention, the Minister said that perhaps there was £6 million around somewhere that might be used over an unspecified period to give effect to the clause. He did not say how many schemes might be approved, but said that he would have to be extremely cautious. The Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council have already proposed 43 schemes. It is clear that the Minister has a different scale and order of magnitude in mind.

Mr. Jopling: I am sorry if the hon. Member thinks that I was coy in my reply. I gave a figure off the top of my head about how much might be available. I said £5 million or £6 million, and I have since discovered that the accurate figure is £6 million. I was not asked how many areas would be affected. In his normal stumbling way, the hon. Gentleman has been less than fair.

Mr. Maclennan: I remind the Minister that he is responsible for the Bill. I find it remarkable that he should produce a figure off the top of his head with an error margin of a million or two. Without a little prompting, he is unable to tell us how much he has in his pocket. That is not good enough. It is clear that the Minister is unprepared to introduce the Bill today. If he had been able to say how many schemes he had in mind, we would have been better placed to judge the importance of this sweetener that is tacked on to an otherwise sour measure.

Mr. John: Does the hon. Member recognise that there are subsequent stages for consideration of the Bill when we can take a hack at the unpleasant parts without damaging the potentially advantageous ones? That is the course that I recommend to my hon. Friends. Even in the hon. Member's convoluted logic, that could not be described as approval of the other sour clauses.

Mr. Maclennan: It is awkward for the hon. Member to be as partisan as he tries to be. If the hon. Member believes that he will succeed in excising clauses 1 to 8 in Committee with the Government enjoying their present majority, he is more of an optimist than I take him to be.

The most important issue is the imposts that the Bill enables the Government to put on agriculture for advice and research. Apart from the substance and size of the imposts, one must question the timing. It is extraordinary that the Government should introduce the Bill when the industry is reeling from one of the worst harvests for many years. The Minister still cannot say whether he has anything in his pocket for that, and now he produces some further hammer blows.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Member has been criticising the Government for introducing the Bill in a year that has been unfavourable to agriculture. Does that mean that last year, which was favourable to agriculture, he would have welcomed the Bill?

Mr. MacLennan: I would not. I would not welcome it next year, when I hope that the harvest will be better, or at any time.

The Bill appears to implement the Government's intention to extract from the farming industry an additional £16·5 million by contributions to the cost of agricultural research and advice. The Minister has rightly pointed out the amount of public funds available. At this point in the history of British agriculture additional assistance, not less, should be made available to the industry.

The industry is under several pressures. I refer not to the problems of the harvest but to the Government's switch in policy from increasing agricultural output, referred to by the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), to bringing output under control and possibly switching it into other productive exercises. That cannot be done without great difficulty, not only because of the loss of income that farmers must sustain as a result of the unheralded change of Government policy but because of the technical difficulties. Advice and research is required on the changing uses of products traditionally used for other purposes. None of that is recognised in the Minister's proposals. The Minister is oblivious not only to the changed direction of agriculture but to the need for changes in animal welfare regulations to meet new and higher standards. The Minister is also oblivious to the public's recognition that more must be spent by the Government and farmers on environmental conservation.

All these matters place new and unavoidable additional burdens on the industry. The Government's proposal to extract from farmers, by way of charges, an additional £5 million for advice that hitherto has been free and a further £6 million for work to be carried out because of the statutory responsibilities of ADAS seems not merely

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insensitive but positively damaging to the industry. Of course, the high quality advice that has been available in the past will continue to be sought, particularly by those who will find it easiest to bear the cost.

One of the Minister's greatest shortcomings is his unwillingness to recognise the enormous differences between agricultural enterprises and the capacity of various farmers to meet the new charges. Some will find it no problem to pay the charges, but others will have difficulty—not only the small farmers and those in less-favoured areas, but especially those who are following the previous Minister's exhortations to boost production to the ceiling and have got themselves into considerable difficulties with the banks. No provision is made in the Bill for those in difficulties to receive the assistance and advice that could be the difference between salvation and going under.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): The hon. Gentleman says that those facing the greatest difficulty are those who will have to change their methods of production or find alternative sources. Surely those difficulties can be summed up by the phrase "rural diversification". As the Minister said, advice and guidance about diversification and finding alternative methods of production in the countryside will continue to be free.

Mr. Maclennan: The Bill does not say that. The Minister said that he would bear that in mind when he produced his scheme, but he has not given us the assurance that the hon. Gentleman suggests has been given.

One of the main complaints about clause 1 is that it is an enabling provision of the widest kind. It allows the Minister to charge for the functions that he told us he does not intend to charge for. That must give cause for concern. If the Minister does not wish to have the power to charge for advice on the improvement of conservation techniques, why does he seek that power? I hope that the Bill will be amended in Committee to make it impossible for the Minister to charge for such advice.

An important issue of principle is involved in the Bill. The Minister has tried to pray in aid for the Bill the recommendations of Professor Bell. To do him justice, the professor never made the recommendation—on which the Minister seems to be relying—that the industry should be charged for advice. I do not think that Professor Bell would be so inept or unwise as to make such a recommendation.

The Minister should have discussed with the industry and all those affected not only the general principle of charging and announcing a global sum that the Treasury required the industry to disgorge but the best way of working out an equitable system of charging which would be accepted by the industry and would not impose the burdens that the Bill will impose.

I believe that advice will still be sought from ADAS, but advice will also be offered by those with a commercial interest in giving expensive advice. Those who supply farmers with fertilisers and pesticides——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: They do not have a monopoly. There is competition.

Mr. Maclennan: That matter was investigated by the Price Commission, which revealed a not entirely healthy situation. If the Government believed in competition and there were effective measures to encourage competition, one might not feel so worried. But even if there are several suppliers, it should not be thought that they do not all have the same interest in selling information and advice which, in a sense, backs up the arguments of the others.

Such advice is not disinterested. Often it is advice to use pesticides that may be unnecessary or environmentally damaging or to use fertilizers that are undesirable if we are seeking to lower the input costs of farming. The trend towards using the advice of commercial suppliers in preference to that of ADAS is likely to be given a considerable fillip by the Bill. That is highly undesirable.

I turn briefly to other matters in the Bill. I cannot get too worked up about whether the membership of the Meat and Livestock Commission should be 10 or 11, though the Minister should have done more to justify the proposed change.

A more important matter arises in clause 8, which makes certain provisions for Food from Britain and gives the Minister power to impose conditions on grants and loans made by Food from Britain. The establishment of that organisation was a desirable step, but there is increasing discontent about how it is expected to operate. The promotion of agricultural development, exports and sales is ripe for a more fundamental review than the Bill suggests that the Minister has in hand.

In particular, we need the widest possible consultation with all sectors of the industry that are to be required to raise levies. It is important that there should be a ballot of farmers and traders, suitably weighted to take account of their stakes in the industry, before the levies are imposed. If the industry has to pay levies to finance its promotional activities, it should be brought under greater democratic control than Food from Britain or any of its offshoots appears to have in mind.

It is not good enough that a few people selected by the Minister—the establishment—should decide what is good for farmers and how the industry's money should be spent. The time has come to recognise that the job of Food from Britain is vital. The Government's funding of £2 million is derisory compared with the French Government's expenditure of well over £100 million per annum. A new structure is necessary to ensure that the money to be drawn from the industry is properly spent.

The Bill is unwelcome. I hope that, if we are not joined by Labour Members and enough of the Conservative Members who purport to be interested in the future of agriculture to defeat the Bill, it will be radically amended in Committee and will return to the House as a quite different creature.

4.58 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has some effrontery to move an amendment in the names of the leaders of the SDP and the Liberal party, when only he and one other alliance Member are present. That shows a flippant attitude to agriculture. No doubt all farmers are beginning to realise that the alliance parties will do all sorts of unnecessary things, including introducing planning into agriculture and, no doubt, rating agricultural buildings and land. I hope that their amendment, if it is put to the vote tonight, will be heavily defeated.

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will the hon. Member for Dumfries

(Sir H. Monro) accept that he has made a totally inaccurate statement regarding the alliance's policy? It is not our policy—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. That is obviously not a matter for the Chair.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) may catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and correct anything that I may have said, but the information that I have is up to date.

As my right hon. Friend the Minister knows, I am deeply concerned about our farmers, who have been badly affected by the bad weather this autumn. As I said to him and to the Secretary of State for Scotland, we had the wettest August and September that anyone remembers in the north of England and Scotland, which caused havoc to hay, silage and the harvest.

Long-term damage has been inflicted on fields by poaching and by wheeled vehicles. The effects of the bad weather covered all sections of the industry. Dairying, livestock and arable, including potatoes, all went through a disastrous period. I know that my right hon. Friend is giving every conceivable thought to providing the additional payments that he announced in October, but if he can make a further announcement soon it will be extremely welcome, as farmers have to plan ahead over the next three or four months for how they will provide fodder for their livestock.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) has never been especially complimentary to landlords, but three of the largest landlords in my constituency have granted a reduction in rent to their tenants on account of the bad weather, which shows how well the landlord-tenant system works when it is run by enlightened landowners.

I know that my right hon. Friend is doing all that he can to deal with the urgent issue of the clawback on the export of ewes. This is a serious problem, especially for hill farmers. I welcome many of the provisions of the Bill, and the bad weather highlights the necessity for high-quality advice when one is facing adversity. I know that ADAS in England and Wales and the colleges in Scotland will play their part, and I am glad to note that the Minister responsible for the environment and local government in Scotland is here.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will do what he can to ensure that there is a great deal of effort in the promotion of research directed to agriculture in the future, which will mean changes in cropping and marketing. Marketing will be the key for agriculture of the future. Those in this House who are interested in agriculture will recognise that good wholesome food has never hurt anybody, and we must fight those who wish to prevent us from eating butter, drinking milk and eating beef, all of which can do only good for the health of the nation.

Clause 9 deals with conservation, in which I am interested. I was involved with what is now the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and with the national parks and the Countryside Commission. I am a member of the Nature Conservancy Council. I warmly welcome the Government's decision to assist Parliament to maintain and enhance conservation and to look after the scenic beauty of the countryside. I am glad that the Government are to do so by voluntary methods and through co-operation, unlike the Bill that was introduced by the Labour party in 1978-79 to deal with Exmoor, by compulsory methods.

I am sure that was the wrong policy, because we should involve farmers and landowners when dealing with conservation. Management agreements will produce results. The various schemes as laid down in the financial guidelines for SSSIs to deal with special scientific interests, when translated into dealing with the countryside relative to clause 9, will provide an adequate set of rules to introduce financial assistance for conservation. It will take time to establish, but substantial progress is being made.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the voluntary agreement idea has not been satisfactory over the past few years? He referred to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and he will recall that it had to be amended this year because the system of voluntary agreement has not protected SSSIs. Before the hon. Gentleman feels too proud about the record of his party, either in terms of legislation or by its presence today, he should reflect that, in proportion, there are fewer Members of his party in the Chamber than there are of my party, and that my party's representation this afternoon is the best, both now and when my two other colleagues were here a moment ago.

Sir Hector Monro: The hon. Gentleman is wrong in his facts. I am a member of the Nature Conservancy Council and we are responsible for introducing management agreements, an enormous number of which have been achieved and are working satisfactorily. The Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Bill, as it then was, was designed to take up a measure which was omitted from the original Act, which affected very few sites. I am glad that the loophole has been plugged, but it never prevented us from pressing on with management agreements.

Mr. Richard Body (Holland with Boston): If the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) had had the courtesy to be in the Chamber earlier, he would have heard my right hon. Friend the Minister answer that question admirably.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): Before my hon. Friend continues, will he take up the point of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), that the Liberal party has the best representation in the Chamber this afternoon. On 26 April he said:

"agricultural land should also be subject to planning consent and planning control".—[*Official Report*, 26 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 1136.]

Apparently that is Liberal policy.

Sir Hector Monro: The SDP compounded that. I think that it would be better for the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) to leave the Chamber before he comments on something about which he knows nothing. If he waits long enough he might be called, but I suspect that he will leave the Chamber within the next five minutes and disappear, never to be seen again.

The financial guidelines have worked well. The Nature Conservancy Council, under the chairmanship of Mr. William Wilkinson, and the Countryside Commission, under the effective leadership of Sir Derek Barber, have

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an enlightened attitude on bringing harmony to the countryside, including those who sometimes disagree with what is taking place.

There is great enthusiasm for the countryside and a unity of purpose to achieve the ideals that my right hon. Friend has set out. The National Farmers Union has given an exceptionally good lead, and the farming, forestry and wildlife advisory groups have set high standards and given a great deal of information to farmers to help them to develop conservation on their farms. That must be welcomed, along with the attitude of the timber growers who, along with the Forestry Commission, are so keen to develop broadleaved trees.

Many conservation groups are playing a valuable role, but we must try to create good will in the countryside, which will not be done if there is too much concentration on securing headlines in local newspapers. Frequently, there is over-reaction to what is happening. Like many right hon. and hon. Members, I travel a vast mileage in cars and trains throughout the year, and on the whole, I find that the British landscape is in magnificent condition. The extent of the damage to the national scenery is remarkably small, and we must keep these matters in perspective.

I must accept that, sadly, some damage has occurred to the countryside, but at the same time there are many estates and farms where conservation is being improved all the time. On balance, the condition of the countryside is as good now as it has been for many years.

I am slightly worried about clause 9. The principle does not cause me concern, but the scale does. It is important that it should not be thought that there will be conservation grants everywhere for those who want to amend their farming policies to obtain management agreements. This must be made clear, so that farmers are not disappointed. It must be realised that assistance will be directed to environmentally sensitive areas. The layman might understand that vast areas will come into that category, but they will not.

Let us consider the areas that might be encompassed by these provisions. The Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council have been making recommendations to my right hon. Friend, and rumour has it that they have submitted 56 recommendations. Lord Belstead said during the summer that about six areas would be chosen. I hazard a guess that that will mean three in England, two in Scotland and one in Wales. These areas will include national parks and many SSSIs. The land upon which my right hon. Friend will be able to offer assistance will not be over-wide. Some of the areas that have been recommended vary between 10,000 and 50,000 acres. I look forward to my right hon. Friend expanding the scheme as we move forward, increase our experience and make more resources available.

I am not critical of my right hon. Friend for providing that £6 million shall be spent in the first year. In getting a scheme of this scale off the ground, and in moving smoothly with the involvement of advisers and other officials who are equipped to assess grant applications and to negotiate management schemes, an enormous amount of effort will have to be expended even to spend £6 million in the first year. I think that my right hon. Friend has probably set himself the right target. As more resources become available we can go further.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman spent about 100 hours in Committee when he was the Minister responsible for piloting the Wildlife and Countryside Bill, as it then was, through the House. With all his experience, can he shed any light on the extraordinary insertion that reads: "unless the Treasury have consented to the making of the order"? If the Bill were the hon. Gentleman's, would he be content with that insertion? What is his explanation of its being there?

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer) *rose——*

Sir Hector Monro: I shall allow my right hon. Friend to intervene.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend might like to refer to section 1 of the Agriculture Act 1957 and to section 29 of the Agriculture Act 1970, which contain just such a provision.

Sir Hector Monro: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving that valuable information. I am sure that the passage would not appear in the Bill if it were not required. The applications must be compatible with the financial guidelines which have been laid down by the Treasury, certainly in terms of management agreements for SSSIs. The provision to which our attention has been drawn is nothing more serious than that. It is right that the matter should have been raised, and I am glad that it has been clarified by my right hon. Friend.

I am especially pleased that a voluntary system has been proposed. There are compulsory powers of notification behind SSSIs, and lists are given of potentially damaging operations. Help will be given only if a request is made positively by the farmer or landowner. There will not be notification, as with an SSSI, and argument later. The voluntary approach is crucial, and that is how we should proceed.

I am glad that there will be enhanced co-ordination and co-operation between the Ministry and the Department of the Environment, the NCC and the Countryside Commission. All four organisations will be immersed in trying to produce a scheme that will not involve farmers being faced with lists of bureaucratic questions. That sort of approach would turn the heads of farmers away from what we are trying to achieve. The scheme must be simple and must be seen to work with the least inconvenience to those who wish to receive assistance. It is so easy to turn people off a scheme. If they lose heart, the momentum of the scheme will be lost. We must not allow it to become wrapped in what farmers would describe as red tape.

Over the past five or six years we have had the pleasure of seeing the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment come together. I hope that they and the Scottish and Welsh Offices will be able to produce a properly co-ordinated and easily understood scheme.

The Bill highlights the Government's commitment to the environment, our heritage and our habitat. Any enthusiast for the countryside, such as myself, should welcome it.

5.18 pm

Mr. Thomas Torney (Bradford, South): The impact of the Bill and the Minister's written statement on 7 November on the farming community and consumers will be immense. It is certain that both the Bill and the statement will have a great impact on scientists and

agriculture advisers who work for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in various capacities. About 20 per cent. of them will be placed upon the scrap heap in the next two years to provide for the £40 million of public expenditure cuts that will be made by the Government over that period.

The Bill makes provision for the Minister to make reasonable charges for services to the farming community. It allows for unspecified charges to be made in all areas of agriculture advice and research and development. Most important, this is to be done without further recourse to this democratic House.

The Bill sets out a major change in Government policy towards agricultural research, which has been built up over the past 40 years. The Government have no mandate to make such changes and I challenge their right to do so. The speed with which the measure is being raced through will present many more difficulties for farmers, and the people who have to implement it will have no time to consider alternative arrangements. I believe that the Minister, in his indecent haste to do the bidding of the Treasury to cut and cut again regardless of the effect on our people, has acted first and thought afterwards.

Agriculture is an industry vital to the economy of Britain. Food production will always suffer from forces outside man's control. In milk production farmers are faced with problems created by man—not British man but foreign man — in other words, the Economic Community. As well as those problems and the problems of high interest charges caused by machinery purchases to make farming more efficient, farmers must now face charges for advice, research and so on, or do without. Many farmers will be forced into that position, particularly the smaller farmers who require that help the most. They need help with the prevention of diseases among farm animals and help safely to eradicate pests.

That brings me to the immense amount of research work that is done to prevent the import of such diseases as rabies, Dutch elm and foot and mouth, and such pests as the Colorado beetle. Research helps animal welfare, checks the safety of animal medicines, inspects abattoirs, prevents the return of brucellosis and controls and checks the quality and safety of foods such as fruit, vegetables and milk.

The Minister said that he does not intend to charge for animal welfare or for steps to fight the return of brucellosis. Ministers come and go, as we all know and see in the House, but nothing is written into the Bill to implement the promises that the Minister has made. Whatever charges the Minister makes are not to be vetted by the House as they should be. Who knows what a future Agriculture Minister, egged on by the Treasury, may do with those promises? The promises made from the Dispatch Box are not worth the paper that they were written on.

There is another aspect of the work where research can be of help. In the United Kingdom there is a massive surplus of cereals. Apart from paying the farmer the cost of producing a huge grain mountain, the taxpayer is footing the bill for storing it—around £150 million. The Select Committee was told last week that the grain is useless and that nobody wants it. The Committee was also told that we shall have to import 3 million tonnes of wheat during the next few months costing around £200 million. Despite the massive amount of grain in store, for which the taxpayer is paying, we have to import wheat to make bread because the wheat in store is no good for that.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that what he has just said is untrue? We have to import 3 million tonnes simply because this year's weather altered the quality of British wheat. It has nothing to do with what is in store.

Mr. Torney: I suggest that the hon. Gentleman does more research. According to the United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association, not me, the wheat in store is useless. In this country we are not producing the type of wheat that we need to make our bread, and it is an acknowledged fact that we have to import it. I believe that even the Minister will agree with that.

The point I am making is that the Select Committee was told that there is definitely an urgent need for cereals research. It is witnesses to the Committee—not me—who have said that. We need research into how we can grow different varieties that meet the different market and consumer needs in the United Kingdom and abroad. We should have research into production so that we can produce more cheaply and compete in the world markets.

The Select Committee was told that we cannot sell our wheat abroad because it is not the sort that the people abroad want. How the Dickens can we have research when the Minister will charge for it? He has already closed some research establishments, putting people out of work and making research less capable of doing its job. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) said earlier, what we need is a reorganisation of our research establishments, not the cutting down of them. If anything, they should be increased. There is plenty of research to be done—not research into greater production, but research into producing less but ensuring that farmers still make a decent living.

With the Bill, the Government are reducing research capability and ensuring that farmers will continue to produce cereals that no one requires and that taxpayers foot the massive bill for the useless cereals in storage. I hope that the Government will have second thoughts. I hope, for instance, that they will implement some of the exceptions to charging that the Minister has mentioned. I hope that in Committee he will put them in black and white in the Bill. That is his opportunity to prove that he means what he says. He should do it in such a way that any Agriculture Minister who might follow him cannot simply make the charges that he seems to agree should not be made. We want the Bill massively amended in Committee, and I hope that the Minister will concede some of our requests.

5.27 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): One of the things that I most dislike, and that is most inconvenient to persons and bodies outside the House, is legislation by reference—legislation one cannot read and know what it means. I regret to have to say that the Bill is a conspicuously bad example of that. I have a pile of bound volumes with me. In those volumes are only five of the 14 Acts of Parliament and one Order in Council that it is necessary to have at hand to know what the Bill means.

In many cases the explanatory and financial memorandum does not answer the questions to which the

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House needs to know the answers. It is never seen again after the Second Reading. When a Bill comes to the House after Committee for Report and Third Reading there is no longer any explanatory and financial memorandum on it. It is disgraceful that the Department is unable to legislate without doing so by reference. It is a constant source of trouble. Although I am not a lawyer, I read in Appeal Court cases how often it is deprecated by the courts of justice.

I will start with clause 1(3) which says:

"Any services or goods provided by virtue of this section may be provided free of charge or for such reasonable charge as the Ministers may determine."

How do Ministers determine it? We cannot see it from the face of the Bill, nor can we see it from the explanatory and financial memorandum. We do not know. Then we come to clause 2 and see:

"in determining any fees to be charged under seeds regulations the Minister may have regard to the costs incurred by him in connection with the enforcement of the regulations."

But where are those costs defined?

When, a few years ago, my Select Committee had cause to look at the certification of the seaworthiness of vessels, which even applied to small barges on canals, we found that the Department was charging £40 an hour for the surveyors' time for travelling to and fro, and enormous sums by way of the overheads on its headquarters in London.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody: The certification procedure was not followed in all cases.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Not in all cases. *[Interruption.]* I know that the hon. Lady may have difficulty in standing up, but if she wants to intervene, I shall give way.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am deeply grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I was reminding him that Ministers did not ensure that the procedure was always applied. He should read the case of the Marques and the evidence that has been given in Plymouth. The Ministers waived the evidence and the use of Board of Trade inspectors on that occasion.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I was giving the House examples of what was relevant, rather than irrelevant, to the matter in hand. If the hon. Lady had been following the proceedings, she would know that what is of concern to hon. Members is not that the proposed charges may be waived, but that they may be heavy—something that appears to have escaped her.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I would go further than that. We have been told by the Minister that there will be no charge for conservation, animal welfare and rural diversification, but one could stretch the concept of a reasonable charge so far as to include the overall cost of providing ADAS, which would include precisely the specific charges that he mentioned.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: That is my worry. Seeing how the word costs has been employed in other such situations, I would have hoped for greater precision as well as a mechanism by which the House can check abuse. It is that which is so conspicuously absent.

Moreover, one has to look at the 14 Acts and one Order in Council without which the Bill is meaningless, to discern what the parliamentary processes are, if indeed they exist. I have not been through all the 14 Acts, but I have yet to discover one, although it may exist, which involves the affirmative resolution procedure, which I so greatly prefer to the negative resolution procedure, because the latter cannot function unless the parliamentary time can be found within the permitted period. That applies not only to clause 1. When we reach clause 3, we read:

"Without prejudice to section 4(1) above,"—

that is, of the Plant Health Act 1967—

"an order under this Act may impose such reasonable fees or other charges as the competent authority may, with the consent of the Treasury, prescribe".

How do we discern, on the face of the Bill, who the competent authority is so that we can decide whether it is reasonable to leave that important matter to the competent authority? We do not find out by looking at the explanatory and financial memorandum. It does not tell us who the competent authority is or whether there is any parliamentary redress if we think that the competent authority has extravagant overheads and is loading too great a proportion of them on to its charges. It is such imprecision that I find so intolerable in the Bill.

Again, when we come to clause 7, concerning the Meat and Livestock Commission, we find, in subsection (2)*(a)*:

"and a levy scheme may make different provision in relation to charges to be imposed to meet expenses incurred by the Commission for different purposes."

For which different purposes? Obviously, the amount of charges that will have to be levied to meet expenses incurred by the Commission will depend on the different purposes for which those expenses are incurred. We cannot find out on the face of the Bill what the different purposes are, and therefore even form a broad guess as to what the magnitude or quantum of the charges is likely to be.

We seem to go through cycles of such legislation which, when it becomes unendurable, has a consolidation Bill after it, which does what the original Act should have done. I should like to say to my right hon. Friend that Dick Turpin's blunderbuss was a precision instrument compared with the Bill. My right hon. Friend would have done much better to look carefully at the Bill's drafting before bringing it to the House for Second Reading. I have not the slightest doubt that in general it would have been possible to set out in the Bill what it means instead of indulging so heavily in the nefarious process of legislation by reference. It is that to which I have particular objection.

Other hon. Members on both sides of the House have already commented—and I do not doubt will comment again in the debate—on other implications of the Bill, but that is the point of substance that I wanted to leave with my right hon. Friend, because I believe that so much of it is avoidable if Ministers say to their draftsmen in advance, "I shall not present such a Bill to the House. You must present to the House a Bill that says on its face as nearly as possible what it does."

Mr. Maclennan: I agree with the thrust of what the hon. Gentleman says, but reverting to clause 1 and the provision to which he drew specific attention, under which the Minister is allowed to make such reasonable charges as he may determine, does he have any reason to doubt that that means anything other than what it states, that the Minister has complete discretion to charge what he likes provided that it is reasonable?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Yes, and, of course, what does the word "reasonable" mean?

Mr. Douglas Hogg: What are the criteria?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Exactly. What are the criteria by which that is to be judged? We are left unknowing. We may even think that we know the present Minister, but in two or three——

Mr. Torney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: I want to draw my remarks to a conclusion because I wanted to share with the House only the shortcomings of the decisions taken about the nature of the Bill rather than go exhaustively through its detail. That is a point of such severity that my right hon. Friend the Minister would be perfectly justified in saying to the House not that he no longer intends to do what he is doing in the Bill—although I disagree with much of it—but that, on reflection, he will take the Bill away; in other words he will not ask the House to give it a Second Reading, but will re-present it later in the Session, redrafted, so that it says on its face what it does. He should do that instead of leaving so much to the happenstance of the judgment—good, ill, benevolent or malevolent—of bodies specified and unspecified at some unknown date in the future.

5.39 pm

Miss Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside): I welcome clause 9 because I am concerned about conservation, but I hope that it is not a cosmetic. I am a bit alarmed when the Minister says that he intends to start in a small way. The truth is that if we do not make a start we will be too late altogether. A tremendous amount of irreparable damage has already been done. It is true that some farmers are concerned about conservation and the environment, but some pretty horrendous things have been done in our countryside over recent years in the drive for profit. We need to get a move on, not start in a small way.

The Minister said that the purpose of the Bill is to target on the priority areas. When I hear the word "target", I think about cuts. Targeting is a euphemism for cuts. The world needs more and better food. How can we justify reducing our research and development when thousands of people are dying of hunger? Does it matter whether food for human beings is grown in Kent, Yorkshire, Ethiopia or Kenya? Are we not one human race? It is ironic, or madness, that at the same time as we propose to reduce our expenditure on research and development into the provision of more and better food, we increase our expenditure on the means to destroy the human race.

In a recent broadcast the Minister said that the Government were cutting expenditure on research and development from £220 million to £200 million. It is now costing us some £2 billion a year to take surplus food into intervention and store it. As was said earlier, is that not the economics of madness? At Question Time last Thursday the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Mr. Body) described those vast surpluses as valueless. The Minister said that they were not, but they are, because we cannot sell them, and in that sense they are of no value. Therefore, would it not be far better and less costly to send them to the starving populations of the African countries? Is it not immoral, or sheer greed, to keep food stored while children go hungry and die of starvation? Is there not one whit of compassion in the Government? Why should we not guarantee to send, say 2 million tonnes a year for the next five years to one of the African countries? *[Interruption.]* We should send stocks wherever the need is greatest.

Research into and the improvement of agricultural production in African countries is also badly needed. We have the expertise and the facilities, so why not concentrate some of those resources on that work? Bob Geldof is a marvellous man, but he rose to prominence because of the failure of this and other Governments to respond to human suffering. We spend a lot of our resources, and rightly so, trying to cure cancer and other malignant diseases, but we do not seem to spend as much on prevention. We are all products of what we eat and drink, and it should be possible to find and grow crops which are anti-cancer and other diseases. We need to do a great deal of work on research and development into that, and I urge the Minister to undertake it. Cannot some of the profits from the sale of the "family silver" be devoted to that work, instead of being handed over to those who are already rich?

During the last war we were desperatley near to starvation, and those of us who were working on the farms were urged to increase output by every possible means. It was quantity that was required. Agriculture students, teachers, professors and all those with scientific knowledge were recruited. They were not always very good. An officer of one agricultural executive committee decided whether land required lime by smelling it. He would pick up a handful of soil, smell it and declare that it needed 2 tonnes of lime to the acre. As nearly all land at that time required lime, he was seldom wrong. We have come a long way since then.

In the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, a nucleus of knowledge and ability second to none in the world has been built up. Farmers have come to recognise the value of scientific research and have turned more and more to the Ministry's officers for advice. It would be foolish, indeed wicked, to reduce that bank of expertise. Nor are young people likely to be attracted into the service if they know programmes are to be run down. I am reliably informed that morale in the Ministry has never been so low. What a record for the Minister to take back to Yorkshire. Yorkshire people were proud of such Ministers as Tom Williams and Thomas Dugdale, but they will not be proud of Michael Jopling.

Mr. Maclean: How proud does the hon. Lady think the agriculture industry will be of the Opposition spokesman who said on 24 September 1985 that agriculture is one of the industries having one of the most malign effects on the environment? Does the hon. Lady agree with that?

Miss Maynard *rose*——

Mr. John: Perhaps the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), whose tongue always outruns his discretion, would remind me where I said that.

Mr. Maclean: I was referring to the Opposition spokesman on the environment. I apologise if I said agriculture.

Miss Maynard: I tried to make the point at the beginning of my speech that a great deal of damage has been done to the environment by agriculture. That is one of the things that worries me when I hear the Minister say that clause 9 will be used in only a limited way. If we are to save what is left, we shall have to get a move on.

[Miss Maynard]

We are no longer as concerned about the quantity of production as we once were, but it would be a mistake to think that further improvements cannot be made. Improvements have come about by a variety of means. The first improvement, and perhaps the most important, has been in the varieties of grain. Those have been stimulated by more fertilisers and protected by almost endless varieties of insecticides and herbicides — too many insecticides and herbicides. They are planted, sprayed and harvested by greatly improved machinery. Much of all that is expensive, and with lower prices in the offing farmers are looking for ways and means of maintaining their output with even better varieties, with fewer fertilisers, and, I hope, by returning to more traditional methods of farming. This applies not only to field crops, but to animal products and, in particular, to horticulture. We must bear in mind that shortly Spain and Portugal will be members of the EEC, and Spain will have a traumatic effect on our horticulture industry.

Opportunities for improvement are many, not least in machinery. Competition is fierce from manufacturers in other countries. If we are to hold our own, we need to keep up our research and development projects. The Minister expects to get money from farmers and companies to finance some of the research that he hopes to retain. That must be a threat to the independence of Ministry advice. That independence has always been strongly defended, and rightly so. It has been the very basis of the confidence that farmers have acquired in the Ministry's advice over the years. Why now throw it away? Does the Minister believe—indeed, can he expect—that a company such as ICI will pay for research for the general good in preference to ensuring its own profits?

The Bill gives the Minister power to impose a reasonable charge for research and development, but, as has been said, what is a reasonable charge? It is certainly not defined in the Bill, which makes an exception for conservation, but no exception for less favoured areas or small farmers. However, it does make an exception for animal welfare. The charges will be imposed without further report to either House for their views. The changes are being made in the absence of an overall policy for agriculture, for the rural economy or for wider land use.

The Select Committee on Agriculture is opposed to any cut in research and development. I hope that the Minister will note the Select Committee's views on that important matter. There is no machinery to collect the charges. No figures have been produced for the full recuperation costs, the cost of raising the charges or the manpower implications. The changes and proposed cuts will do nothing to rationalise the common agricultural policy or commodity production levels, but they will make it more difficult for the industry to adapt and survive.

The speed at which the Bill will be considered means that there will be no opportunity for public debate on the issues. It will result in the imposition of severe and damaging constraints on the farming community at a time of great change.

Research and development has three functions — advisory, development and statutory. The advisory function not only covers advice given to farmers individually and in groups, but encompasses advice to all sectors of the industry and to the Government themselves.

The cost of developing new technology to the point of application is always more expensive than the original research work. However, ADAS development work costs only one quarter of the total Government-funded agricultural research and development budget of £161 million. Such efficiency is achieved through a close working relationship with farmers and their facilities, along with largely self-financed experimental centres.

Advice is often given during statutory visits. Increased contact with farmers through statutory visits increases knowlege of the industry, reveals new problems and identifies research and development needs. Such benefits are about to be lost.

The strength and efficiency of ADAS evolves through its multi-functional, multi-disciplinary role, its close ties with all sectors of the industry, its ability to give unbiased advice and to develop a wide range of systems and techniques, some of which have little interest to the commercial sector.

In terms of increasing self-sufficiency in its products and in overall increases in productivity, no sector in the United Kingdom economy has consistently matched that performance. Yet the cost of the advisory and development work of ADAS in relation to both the increases and the overall agricultural output is fractional at 0·1 per cent. of gross output.

If, as a result of the Bill, the industry is thrown back on relying on commercial advice only, United States experience shows just how biased such advice can be—something that we cannot afford at the present time.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Does the hon. Lady's union sponsors know that she is reading its brief with such little effort or interest?

Miss Maynard: Everybody is entitled to his opinion.

We might be 80 per cent. self-sufficient in indigenous foods now, as a result of the 40-year partnership, but this could soon change as our EEC competitors flood our market with their surpluses. Our economy cannot afford a reversal of the balance of payments contribution made by agriculture.

How are we to close the trade gap when the oil disappears? To cut agriculture's contribution to the balance of payments would be a serious step. The cost of ADAS is a small fraction of the total cost of Government support to the agriculture industry, but its contribution could be significant in sustaining the industry's future, the rural economy and all that depends upon it. The nation cannot afford to lose the expertise and the facilities provided by the industry. Action is required before final decisions are made. I appeal to the Minister. He has time to think again. I urge him to do so in the interests of the community at large.

5.55 pm

Sir Paul Hawkins (Norfolk, South-West): I congratulate the Minister on managing to persuade the EC to agree to the most important part of the Bill—clause 9. It is a starting point for a new departure in farming that is necessary and that can be expanded to be of immense help.

I was glad that my right hon. Friend referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) who is not here. We entered the House together and ever since he has been present at every agriculture debate. His country voice will be much missed until he returns.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) is a good representative of the agriculture workers union with which I have had close ties. However, she is mistaken to say that immense damage has been done by the farming community. The farming community has had to move with the times, to use bigger machines and to change some methods.

Norfolk is often criticised. If the hon. Lady comes to my constituency, which she knows well, she will not be able to go 100 yards without seeing trees and good farming which create the landscape of our country. The worst blots on the landscape are caused by developers of massive bungalow growths near our small towns and villages.

The hon. Lady said that a friend of hers could pick up the soil, smell it and tell whether it contained plenty of lime. In my younger days I could pick up the soil and know whether it had a good dressing of farmyard manure.

The Bill heralds a great change in emphasis and direction for the agricultural industry. That industry has to change from managing shortages to managing surpluses. The farming community — workers, farmers, landowners, researchers and plant and animal breeders — have, since 1939, done a remarkable job feeding us. In foodstuffs, they have got to work another miracle by changing direction without losing heart. It will be just as difficult a task as it was feeding us during and after the war.

Yet all this must be done at a time when the population of the village has completely changed. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must address himself to that problem under clause 9. At present every conceivable and inconceivable sort of attack is being made against the agriculture industry by those who have the ear of the press. I refer to extremists such as animal welfare supporters, environmental lobbyists and so on.

Clause 9 is the most radical clause and, properly used, should ease the transition. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to use it, although I entirely agree with him that the measure must be introduced gradually. We shall have to learn from the mistakes that we are sure to make, and must not involve an enormous number of new areas at the start. Nevertheless, with vigour and imagination, the rural communities could be recreated and revitalised.

I well remember returning to Britain in 1945 and being joined by my family who had been sent to Australia during the war. I recall having to go to the butcher to pick up my meat ration, which was very small for the four of us. Unfortunately, I put it on the car roof and drove up a hill. When I arrived home, I found that although a dog was undoubtedly enjoying it, I was in the doghouse. We must look at what the farming community did after the war to produce surpluses. Those surpluses may be criticised now, but who would not rather live in Britain with plenty of supplies in the supermarkets, butchers' shops and grocers than live in Poland with rationing?

Mr. Dalyell: Last week I was in Swaffham in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and heard some opinions being voiced about the Bill. Incidentally, as the hon. Gentleman knows, I hold him in high regard. He has spoken of revitalising the rural communities under clause 9, but that cannot be done with £6 million. Much more money is needed. What comment does he have to make about the inadequacy of the sum to be made available to meet his own stated objectives?

Sir Paul Hawkins: That £6 million will go a long way towards making a start. As long as we are in the House, the hon. Gentleman and I will no doubt demand more money from successive Ministers. Nevertheless, I am quite prepared to tell my constituents that it is a good start.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Is it not relevant to cite the example of the Nature Conservancy Council? Only three years ago it had a budget of £12 million, yet that has now increased to £22 million, and we may see a 40 per cent. increase this year. Thus, if an organisation proves itself, the Government will back it with money.

Sir Paul Hawkins: I thank my hon. Friend for that example. I do not have the exact figures with me, but I know that the sums are increasing and that example proves my point.

In the light of facts that I was given a few years ago, I believed that due to an increase in population and a backward system of agriculture in many areas, we would not be able to produce enough food to feed the people. Yet the change is there for all to see. India provided more food for Ethiopia than all the Iron Curtain countries put together. China is now exporting food, and under its new direction, we must expect Russian agriculture to be self-sufficient soon.

The Bill sets out a few guidelines for the future, but much more needs to be done to encourage farmers and all those who live in the country to follow the road signposted by it. There is no doubt that we must look for wider markets. Consequently, I am pleased to see the clauses that will encourage Food From Britain. Even if there are food surpluses in France, Germany or Holland, we can sell properly packaged and marketed food into surplus markets.

The only thing that worries me is that we are only 80 per cent. self-sufficient in dairy products and are not allowed by the EEC to fill the gap. We are not self-sufficient in sugar even if cane sugar, which is laundered in this country, is taken into account. We badly need an increased B quota, as that can be grown here. I know that Ministers are doing their best to fight our corner in Brussels, but the task is difficult, and I can only hope that they will succeed.

I believe that some cuts in research were necessary. Our research has stagnated during the past 10 years, and researchers have become hidebound and sterile instead of considering the dangerous plight of agriculture, which will only become worse between now and the year 2000. I am not against charging farmers for some research, and greatly welcome the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Minister that he does not intend to charge for certain services about which many people were worried. However, I am alarmed that new research so badly needed for the future will be lacking in terms of new crops, new ways of adding value to food, and new means of utilising the land, whether it be for growing food or grass or for providing recreation for the masses who live in the towns. Such research is vital for the nation and should be paid for by the nation.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I entirely agree with that point. However, does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if the money comes from the industry and not from taxation through central Government, research will become commercially self-serving? New products may be marketed to agriculture although they are not the best for

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

the purpose in mind. There might be a willing response to research initiatives, but those initiatives would be better funded by an impartial national source than by competitors in the market place, who may not have anything other than their own interests at heart.

Sir Paul Hawkins: It is a great pity that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman, who made a rather long speech at a time when many other hon. Members wish to speak.

We shall not do away with all research. Indeed, there will be a lot of research, but it will be better directed. If farmers and agriculturists have to pay for it, they will take more interest in it and will ensure that we get the sort of research that we need.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will have a word in the ear of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. It is a pity that research institutes should be funded by the Department of Education and Science. I fear that few in that Department understand the future needs of agriculture, and I should like our smaller farmers to be given some hope that charges will not be put beyond their reach. I hope that within the charging system it may be possible to give advice about research and other matters to a group of county council smallholders, either through a committee of smallholders or through county council smallholding officers.

Near my home town there is an area of fenland with a large number of smallholding farmers who are currently under great pressure. Their main profits have always come from growing potatoes and strawberries, as those are the crops for which their land is most suited. Unfortunately, the price of potatoes and strawberries has dropped during the past few years, and those smallholders, with only 40 or 50 acres each, are now under great pressure from the banks. Research should be carried out on a similar area to determine what crops could be substituted for potatoes and strawberries. The smallholders should be given advice on a group basis, as individual advice is a great deal more costly.

If we allow good research workers to leave the industry, there will not be enough of them when we really need them in the years up to the year 2000. In most agricultural debates hon. Members do not make party political points, I am glad to say. However, I must say that I hope that the Government will not follow the lead of the Labour party, whose Home Secretary in the 1970s allowed the police force to shrivel and its best men to leave—men who are now so much wanted today.

I urge Ministers constantly to think of how all parts of the countryside can be encouraged to work together. Only 15 or 20 years ago, country villages were filled with people whose livelihoods came from the land—there were farmers, landlords and farm workers in great numbers. Now there are no farmers in some of the villages in my constituency, only farm managers. The farming industry now has too many large groups. There are few farm workers and practically no agricultural engineers, blacksmiths or the local industries that build around a farming community.

Many of the villages in my constituency are two thirds populated by retired people from the towns, and the majority of the remaining population work in local towns. I welcome those people, of course, because it is good to have villages with people living in them. However, the whole outlook has changed. Everyone wants prosperous villages, well cultivated land, more amenities and more opportunities for a few people to work in the villages by utilising out-of-date farm buildings. I praise my branch of the Country Landowners Association. It has set up courses on the utilisation of farm buildings and has attempted to obtain planning approval for their use as centres of small village industries that will not annoy those who have come to live in the quiet of the countryside.

Unfortunately, those who have come to live in our villages want them to stay exactly as they found them. They want only to get rid of the smelly pigs—a subject that causes me much trouble. However, the pigs were probably there before they came to live in the villages. Those people must be encouraged to realise how vital it is for them, as well as for those who work on the land, that the countryside is profitable and providing work. Farmers must be urged to make wider use of land and buildings, and planners must be more helpful.

I remind the Prime Minister and the Cabinet—my right hon. Friend does not need reminding—that only 1 or 2 per cent. of those employed work in agriculture in the countryside, which is unhealthy for the nation. Until the last decade there was always a reservoir of healthy people living and working in the countryside. We must not drive more working people into the towns and factories to become prey to drug pushers and extreme political agents. We must provide work in the villages so that we can breathe a wholesome atmosphere into the nation.

I am convinced that there is room in every county and almost every village for part-time farmers. Two thirds of Austrian farms are manned by part-time farmers, and many other continental countries have large numbers of part-time farmers. Britain is inclined to discourage part-time farmers, but under the new arrangements we should encourage them so that a great deal of land could be used that would otherwise become derelict.

I urge my right hon. Friend and his Ministers to have a quiet word with the banks. I have heard disturbing stories of banks having encouraged farmers to expand, to spend and to buy large new tractors — when second-hand tractors would have done just as well—but which, now that the price of land has eased, have suddenly turned around and stopped people from spending and drawn in loans. I believe that to be disastrous, not only for the farming communities but for the banks, because their actions are encouraging—as I fear Opposition Members have encouraged in their speeches — a wave of pessimism in the countryside.

I believe that we can surmount the difficulties. The Bill is a great spur to those taking a real interest in the countryside and it will draw people together, I hope that it will be passed unanimously.

6.17 pm

Dr. Roger Thomas (Carmarthen): I do not wish to follow the hon. Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins) into the highways and byways of Norfolk, as they do not appear to compare favourably with the rural areas of south-west Wales.

The discussion and controversy about the Bill will centre on the opening and closing closing clauses. The kernel of the terms of reference given by the Minister to the director general of ADAS was to ascertain whether there was scope for passing on all or part of the costs of ADAS to the user rather than to the taxpayer. The director

general's report will be quoted as evidence both for the status quo—maintaining a service free at the point of use—and for abandoning that and setting up what the Bill's preamble describes in the most vague terms as "reasonable fees".

Hon. Members will recall that ADAS was set up under the Administration headed by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in 1971. The Bill is another example of the dismantling of work done in that era. For example, the Health Service and the local government organisation of that era have already been dismantled.

Despite a certain ambiguity about ADAS, it has been successful and widely appreciated by the agriculture industry. Therefore, we must question the rationality of its widespread demolition by stealth. People both inside and outside the industry regard the move with some trepidation.

The question that the Bell inquiry had to face was whether an appreciably smaller public sector involvement would result in a less efficient and less used service. I suggest, having read the report in detail, that that question was not faced or analysed adequately.

Bell emphasises the need for a substantial public service, with no offer being made to define, let alone quantify, "substantial". However, Bell records that the public sector involvement must be substantial to counter the benefits of support given to fellow member states of the EC, to maintain the element of impartiality of advice, to allow for the widespread and disparate nature of farming activity, and to accommodate environmental and general public interests, not forgetting the high content of statutory and regulatory work that the present ADAS set-up contributes to the agricultural life of the nation.

Much apprehension is being expressed in many quarters about the diminished public financing of agricultural research and development. This reduction is taking place against a background of mounting competitiveness, mounting surpluses and a determination on the part of other countries not to slacken their support but, rather, to make their support more direct and more unashamedly purposeful and effective.

What remains of the 1980s for our agriculture is uncertain and unpredictable in all aspects other than continuing nationalistic domination, whereas co-operation should be the universal ingredient of a Community of member states. Our relatively inexpensive, impartial and environmentally tuned input for advances, allied with innovation flowing from ADAS, ensures that the disadvantaged are not left floundering.

Wider national needs — for example, animal husbandry, health, the safety of man and animal, particularly when socio-economic crises develop—can be coped with adequately only by Government funding, free from commercial interests. The livelihood and basic interests of far too many people are involved to sacrifice that aspect of the work of ADAS on the altar of reducing Government public spending.

It cannot be over-emphasised that small farmers, hard pushed financially — we have them by the score in south-west Wales—will cut corners and find themselves refraining from seeking ADAS support, as the charges will be an unequivocal deterrent.

So far in the 1980s the farming industry has been under pressure. But for ADAS, the effects, bad though they are, would have been worse and more widespread. Surpluses may have to be reduced to a certain extent by methods that hitherto have shown a complete lack of ingenuity. We have witnessed in farming as never before the weak, the poor at adaptation and the inefficient going to the wall.

That has happened despite solid and easily available advice of which farmers could take the utmost advantage. Although that advice is becoming more difficult to get, there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that the challenges facing British agriculture in the coming three or four years will in any way lessen. Farmers and growers, the Bell report admits, will be expected to have a greater need for the level of expert advice of the kind that ADAS has hitherto been providing.

Even those with distant knowledge of the devastation caused by the introduction of milk quotas in April 1984 cannot but have appreciated the sterling work of ADAS in that crisis. I remind the Minister — I regret that the Secretary of State for Wales, who was with us earlier, is no longer in his place—that for a substantial percentage of milk producers in south-west Wales, the crisis is by no means over. The bankruptcies are continuing and the sums of money owing to the banks are as high as ever. Adaptation was difficult even with ADAS to help and supervise every move. Making the availability of such help more remote and dependent on a fee per item of service will tip the balance of survival and viability for hundreds of Welsh families.

The Minister said that certain areas would be protected. These areas have been defined as conservation, animal welfare and rural diversification. However, when will a person seeking advice be told whether the exact terms of the matters for which advice and guidance are being sought fall within, rather than outside, those definitions? There will be continuing wrangling and, in such circumstances, frustration will follow. There will be a loss of determination on the part of farmers to seek advice. Farmers deserve better than being placed on the horns of that dilemma.

Advisory work charging could, apparently, lead to an income of £5 million. The rates are yet to be worked out. Everybody who uses the service—small farmers trying to eke out a living under disadvantaged conditions, or people forced to diversify under severe financial perils — will be expected to pay up. Obviously there are important exclusions, but for how long will they remain exclusions? Should the income estimated from charges prove to be a serious over-estimate, there will be further cuts, and they will be at a deeper level, affecting far more of the farming population.

It is difficult to estimate, as part of the public spending exercises, whether even those concessions will not one day be brought within what is called the target area. Much is left undefined, such as the method of collection, what manpower will be involved in the collecting procedure and whether penalties will be imposed for evasion.

In the years that ADAS has existed, our food self-sufficiency has increased from 66 to nearly 80 per cent. Without ADAS, that would never have been achieved. Better yields and productivity can be linked directly to ADAS and its steadfast support. Now, access to ADAS is being made less freely available, and this at a time when criticism of the cost of agricultural support and the production of commodity surpluses cannot easily be countered.

Agriculture in Britain has never functioned in a more competitive situation, yet the Bill lessens the support given

[Dr. Roger Thomas]

to it quantitatively and relative to that offered by our major competitors. How will the implementation of reasonable charges affect the present unrivalled opportunities for advisers to influence and maintain the efficiency of the industry and the high standards of animal health and surveillance? Bell underlines the way in which the integration of policy-making and execution make for efficient administration.

With the proposed changes, much of that attainment and mutual trust will be placed in jeopardy. Will the modest financial savings be too high a price to pay for such major readjustments? An opinion from the farming community, particularly from the farmers of west Wales, would be helpful. I assure the Minister that their overwhelming answer would be non-acceptance of the proposed changes.

The present service guarantees the optimum adoption of existing and new technology. While, in general, the Bell report is at best tentative and in some respects hesitant, it makes some occasional outspoken comments. The report states that the Government wish to establish a favourable climate so that the private sector can be involved in producing advice for the agriculture industry.

There appears to be a great parallel between what is happening in the Health Service and what is happening in the agriculture industry. The Government are paving the way for a smaller bill to be paid by the public sector. The result will be a general deterioration for the people least able to afford it.

ADAS is mildly criticised for being a reactive and negative organisation — that is fair comment. It is feasible, but unlikely, that reasonable charges will correct that aspect. Bell courageously states that charges imposed on a service that has been free of charges for so long, will be bound to have undesirable effects. Good features such as the splendid relationship between clients and advisers will very likely be lost forever. As commercial advice is often given with commercial ulterior motives surfacing, despite the best of basic intentions, the trust between the needy and the suppliers of independent impartial service will go, probably for ever.

In a written reply on 7 November the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food catalogued in as exact a manner as possible, in what was obviously a vague exercise, where he hoped to save the £6 million in 1987-88 through increased statutory charges. We still await his full shopping list. The list included milk and dairy inspections, pig and poultry health schemes, approval of pesticides and the enforcement of seed regulations. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that hard-pressed farmers in my rural constituency will not be happy to face increased and fresh charges. This additional layer of bureaucracy on top of what farmers have been tolerating in the past two years will not be relished.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I must correct one point. The hon. Gentleman keeps referring to the Health Service and agriculture. They are very different animals, because the agricultural industry is an industry, and the Health Service is a service. The hon. Gentleman also talked about the problems in south Wales. There must be some ordinary businesses, as opposed to farming industries, in south Wales. Does the hon. Gentleman expect all industry to have free advice?

Dr. Thomas: Perhaps when the hon. Gentleman has time he will conduct a survey in my constituency. He will see that it is a predominantly rural constituency. The Labour party does not hold many predominantly rural seats, but mine is an exception.

Mr. Ron Davies: We shall keep it.

Dr. Thomas: Certainly.

Clause 9 brings respectability and, possibly, an important vote-catching element to the Bill. The potential of the Green vote and Green representation in the Federal Republic of Germany has not gone unnoticed here. We are well aware that the Green party, in combination with the Social Democratic party, now rules in the Land of Hesse in West Germany and that there is a possibility that at the next Federal election the Green party will oust the Free Democratic party as the third party in the Republic and form a coalition with the Social Democrats. Perhaps the Germans have the advantage of a fairer electoral system than ours.

Mr. Jopling: That is interesting.

Dr. Thomas: It is a long-held view.

Clause 9 is a limited move, but one in the right direction. It is little more than testing the water. It is a pilot scheme, but its implications will know no bounds. At the very heart of clause 9 is an admission of great public restiveness, reservation and, indeed, challenge to modern expansive agricultural practices. This will be reflected in the ballot box of 1987 and 1988 as never before. Any party not offering a deep, dedicated, understanding response to this problem will suffer at that ballot box.

6.35 pm

Mr. Richard Body (Holland with Boston): The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) spoke as though we intended to dismiss everyone in ADAS and close every establishment engaged in agricultural research. The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) was not much better. It is no good their complaining about increasing food surpluses, as I do, and at the same time expecting research establishments to go on as they have been for the past 30 years.

Those of us who have had the advice of ADAS—I have been grateful for that advice — and of its predecessor, the National Agricultural Advisory Service, know that its paramount objective has been to increase production. All its thinking in the past 30 years has been along those lines. It is difficult to change direction, but ADAS will do so and at a smaller cost to the taxpayer than the cost in the past 30 years.

The same can be said of agricultural research establishments. For 30 years, they too have been directed towards one end — increasing output — and they have been marvellously successful. We now want a different type of research. It will be less expensive but just as important.

I cannot find words to describe my pleasure at supporting the Bill. I feel over the moon. Since 1968, I have been a critic of our agricultural policy, as my right hon. Friend the Minister is only too well aware. It has been uncomfortable and disagreeable. Because 28 per cent. of my electorate is directly engaged in farming, I have had to do a great deal of explaining. The Bill transforms all that. I am more than delighted by it.

I was a critic also of the Labour Government. They were worse. They started it. All parties put our farmers on a treadmill which began as soon as we established a system of guaranteed prices. It sent out a signal to the then puny industries that supplied agriculture. The industries saw the signal and began a great research programme which has cost hundreds of millions of pounds supplemented by further hundreds of millions of pounds of public money. All that research has been directed towards increasing the use of inputs on the farm. Those inputs have increased output and, with increases in output, farm gate prices have decreased in a steady downward trend. Each time farm gate prices have gone down, farmers have been pushed into increasing output still more and into calling for research to enable them to produce more with still more inputs. Every time that that treadmill has gone round, the input-output ratio has gone up a peg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Is my hon. Friend saying that a policy that was designed to increase self-sufficiency was wrong in its objective and concept?

Mr. Body: Yes, I would, but I do not want to travel down that avenue, and I should be out of order if I tried to do so. I have argued at great length that this was not in the long-term interests of either our country or our farmers. The policy has caused many thousands of farmers to leave the land. As the input-output ratio increased, only those farmers who had the size of farm upon which output could be increased were able to go on standing on the treadmill. One by one the smaller farmers fell off it. They have fallen off it at the rate of 3,000, 4,000 or 5,000 a year.

There has been a fall in the number of farmers in my constituency from 5,000 when I first became a Member of Parliament to 1,000. It is that fall which made me question our agricultural policy and study it; and with great reluctance I became a critic of what had been done by successive Governments.

This policy cannot continue. The leaders of the National Farmers Union have connived at it. One understands their reasons, but farmers have no influence upon NFU policy unless they sit on the national council.

One needs to be a large scale farmer with a son or a farm manager to look after the farm to be able to afford the time to travel to London on three or four days each week. The beneficiaries of the present system are the farmers who have places on the NFU's national council. Certain quarters of the farming press also support this policy. They depend upon the advertisements provided by those companies with an interest in a high input-output policy.

We have reached such a level of output that, for every commodity that has the questionable advantage of a guaranteed price, there is a structural surplus. The one exception is lamb. Although this country is reaching self-sufficiency, it is still not self-sufficient in lamb. But there would be a surplus were it not our consumers prevented from buying the quantities of lamb from New Zealand that they wish to have.

Clause 9 is superb. This morning I took down from the bookshelf a book that I wrote some years ago "Farming in the Clouds". At page 156, I saw that I had argued for a new Agriculture Act which contained something very similar to the marvellous clause 9 that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has inserted in the Bill. It seems to be word for word what I wrote. *[Interruption.]* Yes. Perhaps there is a breach of copyright, but I am all for that. My thoughts can be plagiarisd by my right hon. Friend as much as he wishes.

We shall argue in Committee about how to decide whether a certain part of a county should or should not be inside one of these environmentally sensitive areas. We shall not find a satisfactory answer, no matter how hard we try. However, this is a beginning. It is almost an experiment. We are doing what other countries have not even attempted to do. Therefore, it is wise to begin in a limited way. We shall be spending a derisory £6 million. Many hon. Members wish that it was a much larger sum of money than that, and I do not doubt that eventually it will be.

By making progress towards that end we shall put farming in balance again. It is woefully out of balance. Our supplies of food must be brought into balance with demand. We must also return to the kind of balance to which my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins) referred: a balance in the population of our countryside. It is dreadful that so many tens of thousands of people in the farming industry have gone to work in market towns or factory areas. If we proceed along the path outlined in the Bill, I am certain that many thousands of small farmers who are now in danger of going out of business will be able to survive.

The Bill will also bring to an end two evils that have cursed our countryside: first, the exodus from the land and, secondly, the way in which too much of our countryside has suffered from the obsession about growing far too much wheat and far too many other crops which are unsuitable for the soil or for our climate. This was proved by the last harvest. If we can bring that to an end, which I believe the Bill will be able to achieve, especially when further areas are included, we shall have done a great service to agriculture. Every farmer and every farm worker in the country will then say that this was a thoroughly good measure.

6.46 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): This debate has been full of revelations. I had not realised that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food had been plagiarising the work of the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Mr. Body). I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for generating the idea that has been incorporated in the Bill, be it ever so timidly and inadequately. The inclusion of clause 9 makes it difficult for any member of the Opposition to vote against the Bill. Clause 9 is a beginning and we should like to build upon it.

The hon. Gentleman said that British agriculture has changed tremendously during the last 40 years. When I took over a very large part of rural Cheshire I did not look with great favour upon the acres that were coming into my nicely compact constituency. Then I studied the census and realised the practical results of precisely the kind of changes to which the hon. Gentlman has referred.

Fewer than 3 per cent. of my constituents are now employed in agriculture. Many of the small businesses that were essential satellites of the agricultural industry have also disappeared. The change has been dramatic. The dependence of villagers upon agriculture for their employment has completely changed. They are becoming increasingly dependent upon town workers who buy houses in the country. Under this Government they are

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also losing their other services—their buses and schools and many of the other facilities that make it possible for people to live in villages. However, that needs to be spelt out in considerable detail.

It is vital to refer to the implications of the loss of very important research facilities. Agriculture changed, developed and reached a much higher level of productivity by using the highly skilled and very carefully established abilities of the agricultural advisory services.

That service began early in the last war and change and development went hand in hand with increasing agricultural productivity. Unfortunately, the common agricultural policy has, for the first time in centuries, changed the country's entire land use. Cheshire has good grasslands and is capable of producing high milk yields yet it is now locked into a position where outside forces are putting enormous pressure on the farming community.

I have been involved in agriculture all my life and have not always felt warm sympathy for the farming community. However, the farmers in my constituency are now suffering under the milk quota system in a marked and unacceptable way. I undertook some research into that matter. I studied the figures and discovered that in almost 90 per cent. of the cases, the people who suffered most were the small farmers — the tenants, those with holdings from the county, the young people coming in who had perforce to undertake heavy bank loans and those who had come into the industry able only to establish themselves on a smallish farm. The people who have benefited from the changes made by the Government have been those in agricultural businesses. The large farm institutions have taken over more and more acres, particularly since the institution of the milk quotas. That has not been done without causing great and positive harm to the people involved. Some of my constituents have suffered nervous breakdowns and there have been increasing numbers of bankruptcies. The personal tragedies revealed by the figures are real.

I am worried that under the Bill we shall change ADAS in a way that will make the position even worse. After all, the person who needs highly skilled advice is the person who is running a small unit on his own or with the assistance of one other person. He cannot go out and find a consultant, and he will not be able to write off that help against his business interests for taxation purposes or employ someone to rejig his entire liability. It is wrong to tell a farmer in Cheshire who is running a small but successful herd that he should now lose a percentage of his herd—that may make the difference between viability and non-viability—and should look for alternatives in agriculture when there is no alternative. I hope that I do not sound like one famous lady when I say that, in Cheshire, there is no alternative. There is no alternative if one already has a high bank overdraft and pressure is being put on one to give guarantees somehow to find the money to service the loan and repay it before too long.

Tenant and small farmers are in the front line and have been savagely squeezed, but the position is far worse than that. In today's debate, hon. Members have referred to ADAS as a one-way street, as if it were only the expertise flowing from that body to the farmer that was important. The intelligence that the body gathers in its constant day-to-day contact with the farming community is vital.

When I intervened earlier, the Minister seized upon a part of my remarks and said that the Government had made it clear that they would not charge farmers for any brucellosis measures. I should like to remind the Minister that when I first came to the House brucellosis was not a recognised disease. Brucellosis causes great difficulty to many farming communities because it is a recurrent and nasty disease, even if it is not lethal. The then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did not accept that fact.

My ex-husband and I pursued that matter at considerable length because we had been involved in a farming community, and with the discovery of diseases at an early stage. We knew the effects that disease had upon the people in our practice who lived on small farms. We witnessed the difficulties that arose when there was an interplay between animal disease and human beings. It is not the Opposition's intention, whether with regard to a notifiable disease — statutory involvement — or a difficulty, to charge the farming community for those services. I can assure the Minister that in some respects cows are like people, even like Members of Parliament. They are capable of getting diseases and of transmitting those diseases. They transmit the diseases to the people we should be most concerned with—the farmers.

Before the expertise of ADAS is dissipated, we must be sure that the same levels of animal husbandry, safety standards and research can be maintained. That is absolutely essential to the agricultural industry. I do not believe for one moment that we can maintain those levels. The Bill does not say how long it will take to raise alternative moneys or how much will be needed. The Bill is a device to reduce the numbers of people involved in services at present. It will cut the services used and move further and faster towards a position where those who are directly involved in commerce—I make no criticism of that—will do in the agriculture industry precisely what they have done in the National Health Service.

One need only consider the amount of money spent by the pharmaceutical companies on advertising drugs. Such spending will increase when the only services that are freely available are those that are tied directly to some commercial input or output. That is obvious and we should take account of it.

The Bill will destroy an established and effective service that may perhaps be described as a little conservative. That is being replaced by the suggestion that if farmers can pay for it they may have access to high standards of research and development, although there is no hint of where the money will come from. Research and development cannot be maintained without considerable input and that is another aspect of ADAS's work that will suffer under the Bill.

There is no evidence of examination of input in the Bill. Professor Bell's report has been prayed in aid throughout the debate but I do not believe that there was anything in it to suggest that we should entertain the major changes proposed by the Bill. The Bill moves rapidly towards a system which, far from assisting the agriculture industry, will cause us in 10 years' time to recreate advisory services that will by then have lost many talented, hard-working and committed people. We shall find that those people are not easy to replace.

The Opposition will not vote against the Bill tonight because of clause 9. I trust that the Bill will not create another set of initials. I believe that there should be an organisation set up to protect the public from those who

use jargon. If we go any further down the road of ESAs and SSSIs, perhaps we ought to consider returning to the point where we say what we mean. I do not join the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) in his condemnation of the Bill except in one regard. The hon. Gentleman did not understand that the Ministry and the parliamentary draftsmen have drawn the Bill in such a confusing way that the only inference can be that they do not want the House to understand it. The draftsmen certainly do not want the agriculture industry to understand what is involved or the charges that will be laid at its door. It would be an uncomfortabled an unfortunate event if that were known before the Bill had been passed.

The Bill is yet another step down the road to the destruction of an agricultural policy that was dictated by climate, geography and the needs of the people, towards an agricultural industry that responds only to the highly dubious stimuli of the profit motive, in the narrowest and most unacceptable sense. I hope that the Minister will think again before he pushes through this damaging change in the ADAS service.

6.59 pm

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): The Bill proposes important changes in the pattern of the funding of research, and it is to that subject that I shall address my remarks.

The Government are entirely right to set out to reorganise what had become an excessively elaborate structure of agricultural research and to seek to achieve some economies in the process. It is also right, in principle, that the growers should contribute to the costs of applied research in which there is an identifiable benefit for them.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins) that those who pay for a service tend to value it rather more. If the growers contribute to the cost of research, they will attend to the findings of that research and apply them with greater interest. I am sure that it is also beneficial to find ways to bring about a closer relationship between business men and academics.

If the strategy has much to commend it, the implementation of that strategy has, hitherto, been problematic. The time scale and phasing by which changes have been introduced have created great difficulties. A fundamental rethink of the purpose of research, its organisation and funding take time to carry out and it then takes time to implement the findings. The Government have rushed that process. They have cut the funding before they have answered some essential questions. They have done much transitional damage in the process.

Since 1980, there has been a string of successive policies—nil growth, the switch from volume planning to cash planning, the transfer of resources from the Agricultural and Food Research Council to other research councils, and a drop in Ministry commissioning—and the cumulative effect of those policies has been that by 1986-87 the AFRC will have had to find savings of about £6 million. There has been a substantial reduction in total funding and there has also been further disruption arising from the redistribution of £7 million of remaining resources as a result of the AFRC's new corporate plan.

It was therefore late in the day when the priorities board was established in the summer of 1984. In January 1985, long before it reported, my right hon. Friend announced that he proposed to cut funds for agricultural research by £10 million in 1986-87 and by another £10 million in 1987-88. There were to be further cuts but, at the same time, uncertainty remained. His figures were qualified as being provisional and uncertainty has continued through this year, as shown, for example, in his written answers of 24 May and 23 July.

It was only in the summer, as we understand it, that the interim report from the priorities board was made to him, and even then it was not published. The final report from the priorities board has yet to be made. Nonetheless, cuts continue. In October, for example, nearly half of the staff of the Soil Survey received redundancy notices. During the autumn of this year, redundancy notices have had to be served thoughout the service to implement the cuts that are due to fall in 1986-87.

Time was needed to achieve that process of change —which, in principle, could be justified—in a way that did not cause damage in the process. The NFU was willing to respond. Its principal commodity committees have been meeting to consider the possibilities of a levy and contributions from the growers, but they need time to think that through and they are not due to have a meeting to make a decision in principle until January 1986. The growers have needed time to consider the new world that the Government propose. It has taken time. It was bound to take time for growers and academics to come together. They have lived in different worlds. Even after a consensus is reached, there are many practical issues to be sorted out.

My criticism is that cuts have been introduced ahead of the establishment of rational priorities. It has been an unhappy and unnecessary way in which to proceed. It has been arbitrary. What ever may or may not be the merits of the Soil Survey, for example—and I believe that they are great — it cannot have become 50 per cent. less valuable overnight. Decisions have been made amid uncertainty and confusion about priorities, funding and relative responsibilities.

That is the atmosphere that has persisted in recent years and caused great demoralisation among research staff. They remain demoralised. Morale is important. Research is a creative activity that depends upon confidence, enthusiasm, full concentration and morale, and it is impossible for research to be carried out creatively in an atmosphere in which research teams do not know whether they will even exist the following year and in which, rather than concentrate upon their research, the members of those teams wonder whether they can find new jobs. A consequence of that is that good projects have been scrapped and other projects are at present disintegrating or deteriorating in quality. It is worth adding that much personal disappointment, anxiety and distress have been caused by all those factors.

What has happened at the national vegetable research station at Wellesbourne illustrates the point. Between 1982-83 and 1985-86, the station will have lost 20 per cent. of its manpower and 30 per cent. of its graduate scientists. A further cut of 4 per cent is anticipated from April 1987 in consequence of reductions in MAFF commissioning and DES requirements, and the typical 2 to 3 per cent. erosion of real funding caused by cash planning.

Work of proven value has therefore been aborted. It is of proven value. The funding put into the national vegetable research station has been an investment. The

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result has been improved efficiency among vegetable growers with lower inputs a reduction of imports, an improvement in exports and benefits to the economy the environment and the housewife. The economic benefits of the work carried out at Wellesbourne over the past 15 years have been demonstrated to be worth cumulatively £52 million a year. The cost of vegetable research is £4 million a year at the NVRS £4 million a year at ADAS. If we achieve a return of £52 million per annum on an investment of £8 million per annum, it is a return of 650 per cent. It is good value. That is one sector only to illustrate the point.

The Government approach has not been sensible. It is derived from a Treasury imperative to make economies. My criticism is not of my right hon. Friend or of this Government; it is of the processes of Government in this country. In the way we review public expenditure, we seem unable to achieve a rational ordering of priorities. We are unwilling to recognise that in public expenditure, as in private, we may need to spend money and invest to save money later.

Mr. Body: Is not one of the tragedies of any cuts at Wellesbourne the fact the Professor Bleasdale and some of his colleagues are uniquely able to make considerable advances in biological farming? That is what we want if we are to make clause 9 a success.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend is correct. Through the capacities of those research teams, we can move the frontiers of agriculture in better directions. It is worth adding, in response to what my hon. Friend said, that Wellesbourne can contribute to the needs of the Third world.

The Government have been right to attempt to cut waste in all departments. However, it is sad that research should be cheese pared. These cuts are minuscule in relation to total Government expenditure, but they are of great importance to the research institutions. If the Government instead devoted still more of their energies to identifying scope for further economies in areas of Government activity and Government processes, everybody would be better off.

Science is an investment for Britain. It is essential and it is the basis of advance. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Mr. Body) that advance should not be crudely equated with increased output. But we shall develop only on the basis of good science. With the pace of change as fast as it is, it is necessary to have good science in Britain.

Every British Government have failed science. OECD figures show that in 1981 Government funding of civil research and development was 0·81 per cent. of GDP in France and 1·05 per cent. in Germany. In the United Kingdom, it was only 0·64 per cent. of GDP. Those other countries and the United States have been increasing their public expenditure on research. The British Government have been planning a 10 per cent. reduction in the volume of research in the 1980s. As the Advisory Board for the Research Councils has warned, the effects on industries of all kinds could be grave and even irreversible.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has found an additional £15 million in successive years for science, but, welcome though it is, I fear that it is only a small offset in a long process of deterioration.

The Government should not have withdrawn their funding for agricultural research before establishing priorities for the future, the division of responsibilities and new sources of funding.

I should be grateful if the Minister would tell us the Government's thinking on these questions and also the thinking of the priorities board. We are debating in ignorance of expert consideration that has been given to these important matters. Hon. Members are not the only ones debating in ignorance. Directors of research establishments and unions are also in ignorance of that useful advice.

What is the Government's view on the appropriate minimum level of agricultural research? Do the Government intend that the industry should fill the whole gap between their contribution and what they regard as the minimum acceptable level? The AFRC hopes to increase its receipts from the industry by 1989 to £7 million, but that would leave a shortfall in the meantime. The sum of £7 million will eventually be only a partial replacement of the lost Government funding.

I recognise that the Government must proceed by consent and that it would not be practical to impose a levy. However, the Government should hold a view about the volume, scale and pattern of research that is required.

Do the Government believe that only the growers should contribute? Other industries, such as the agricultural equipment and food processing industries, are beneficiaries of applied research. Does the legislation allow for them to contribute? I do not believe that it does, but it should.

We must also consider the impact on research of the introduction of private contributions. The growers and the private industrial contributors will want a say in the allocation of their money. The NFU, not surprisingly, and reasonably enough, talks of accountability. We should recognise that farmers will not be interested in long-term or even medium-term research with uncertain outcomes. They are involved in a day-to-day fight to hold their share of a static market. They will want research that is specifically aimed at finding cheaper processes and finding them rapidly.

The Government must take a view on the appropriate proportion of commercially orientated and short-term research. There is nothing wrong with that type of research, but it should be a limited part of the whole. If the proportion of total research were 10 per cent., I believe that many of the research institutions would accept that. That would be about right; it would be a tonic and a stimulus. If the proportion were 20 per cent., that might be excessive. If it were 50 per cent., it would be a gross distortion of research priorities and a grave danger to the programme of basic research. The Government must accept that they have a duty to preserve the integrity of research as a public service and to maintain a body of disinterested research. In certain circumstances, the AFRC has to be a watchdog for the community against commercial interests.

I am worried about the weed research organisation being wound up. I question whether it is wise to leave a whole area of agricultural research to the agro-chemical industry. It is surely up to the Government to express society's priorities. I do not wish to speculate about the

nature of the levy and what the precise administrative mechanisms should be, but there is a case that deserves consideration for the levy to take the form of a tax on nitrogen fertilisers.

Consideration of those matters has not taken place, and the debate has been inadequate. Meanwhile, there are pressing political and administrative necessities. We must relieve the uncertainty that afflicts research establishments. It is in the nature of their work to live with uncertainty, but it is unfair to ask them to live with additional Government-imposed uncertainty.

We need a sensible timetable. If we accept that private contributions to the cost of research must come, I beg the Minister to get them into place before he removes Government funding. Let us not put at further risk research capabilities that are fragile, precious and irreplaceable—or if replaceable, only after a long time and too late.

We must clarify the relative responsibilities of the Government, the growers, other industries, charities such as the Wellcome foundation — which may have considerable extra resources to allocate to research work —and international bodies. Above all, the Government must make a commitment to maintain their share, in relevant purchasing power terms. They must stabilise their appropriate contribution. Without stability, it will be impossible to achieve a satisfactory administrative structure and for research to be carried on with confidence and creativity. The growers are worried that the Government will progressively withdraw their funding support. The Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1944 states that the Government "shall" provide a certain range of advisory and research services. This Bill in 1985 is permissive only and says that the Government "may make provision". If the growers are to contribute, as I believe that they will, the Government should demonstrate their own good faith.

7.18 pm

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Merionnydd Nant Conwy): I endorse almost everything that the hon. Member for Strafford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) has said, and I thank him for the clarity of his summary of the issues that affect research. Our experience of the Welsh plant breeding station at Aberystwyth confirms the hon. Member's argument. I especially echo his point about the uncertainty for researchers' careers, their employment and morale arising out of the cuts.

Most of the debate has been about the relationship between the Bill and agricultural policy. That is right. It is a measure of the inadequacy of the Bill that it addresses those issues only in a negative way. As other hon. Members have argued, it is precisely the wrong time to make cuts or to raise charges in the advisory services for agriculture, because of the crisis that agriculture is going though. The debate is taking place against the background of the European Commission's Green Paper on the common agricultural policy. This was an issue in the last agriculture Question Time and, ever since the Green Paper's publication, it has been an issue for farm unions, farmers and conservationists and those involved in regional development.

The European community is considering closely the various choices for a long-term agricultural policy. New methods for market prices, the rejection of quotas and the need to pursue goals of economic production that are radically different from those laid down by the Government. When such changes are being brought about, that is precisely the time that agriculture requires more advice and specialised support, and not less.

The European Commission's Green Paper examined the factors that determine the rate of change in productive farming and gave priority to the technical and economic effectiveness of research and counselling services. In the Commission's assessment, that factor was more important than market demands and the extent of guaranteed support for lines of production.

In this critical time for the farming community, the last thing that we should be doing is to introduce charges that may deter people from using the advice service. Those of us who have been closely involved with the work of ADAS in the hill and less-favoured areas of mid-Wales and other parts are worried about the already low take-up of advice services. That is referred to in the reports that are the background to our debate.

The Minister said in his statement on 7 November, and repeated today, that there will be no charges for conservation measures, for animal welfare or for the diversification of the rural economy. However, he needs to reconsider charges in less-favoured areas. What is the point of not charging for some parts of the advice package if he is charging for other parts? It makes sense to exempt less-favoured areas from all charges.

I tried to raise that point in an intervention during the Minister's speech, but he failed to respond. Now he is leaving the Chamber. I hope that the Minister of State, who is to reply, will deal with that matter, even if he neglects my other comments.

The structural changes do not involve only levels of production. They involve other aspects of the Bill, including the relationship between agriculture and the rest of the rural economy and the rural environment. All Opposition Members welcome the consolidation of measures from the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and previous Agriculture Acts which stress the role of the advisory services in advising on other enterprises of benefit to the rural economy.

The Commission's Green Paper stressed the need for the fuller integration of agriculture into the general economy and the need for regional development plans in rural zones in the Community. When agricultural enterprise has to relate to other enterprises, we need more detailed advice, not less. We also need a linking of the advice proposed for the agricultural part of the enterprise with the advice for those working in agriculture but seeking other activities.

The Commission emphasised that job creation outside agriculture would become a key issue for many agricultural problem regions. In those areas, it is essential to have available as much support as possible. We need precisely the multi-sector and multi-discipline approaches to agricultural advice that ADAS has been able to offer.

I echo the arguments of the farmers union in Wales and the National Farmers Union that when the high productivity and efficiency of food production is to be replaced with other public objectives for agriculture, this is precisely the time when we need to ensure that advice is available to make the transition effective.

The co-ordination and linking of agriculture with other enterprises is important. I have debated the issue on a number of occasions with the appropriate Welsh Office Minister, and I put to him the need for the Welsh Office to reconsider the co-ordination of rural policy. If there is

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to be effective advice for an enterprise, surely there needs to be a framework of policy at national level in Wales and the rest of Britain.

The Secretary of State for Wales has responsibility for the Forestry Commission, the water authority, tourism, the development agencies, national parks and local authorities, all of which are involved in some of the objectives for rural enterprise set out in clause 1.

If diversification of the rural economy is to be one of the major objectives of agriculture policy, much more co-ordination will be required and we shall need a more positive response from the Government to the work of the Countryside Commission, and particularly to its study on the future of the uplands. A long written answer in *Hansard* is not an adequate response to the years of work that the Countryside Commission put into that study or to the trust that those of us who attended the public hearings put in the discussion process. That was the most important consultation about the future of the uplands in recent times. The Government dismissed it in one written answer — albeit a long one — in *Hansard*. That was an inadequate response to a serious consultation document. When the Government look again at the integration of rural policy, I hope that they will look at that matter.

As I keep reminding the House, I represent most of the Snowdonia national park. I am well aware of the environmental sensitivities in the park; I have to live with them almost daily. I note that 10 areas in Wales are designated as potential environmentally sensitive agricultural areas. I hope that the appropriate Welsh Office Minister will read this speech in *Hansard* and will respond to the issue of the interrelationship between environmentally sensitive areas and the other environmental designations, such as national parks, areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest. We must look carefully at the various designations and how they interrelate, and particularly at existing expenditure on environmental work taking place in, for example, the national parks and the SSSIs—or not taking place, in the case of agriculture.

I hope that the Standing Committee will consider introducing an independent arbitration or appeals procedure. Those of us who are keen to establish a consensus on environmental and farming issues within the national parks and other areas have pressed the Government to establish such a procedure. Whenever I and others have conciliated between landowners and conservationists in sensitive areas of the national parks, we have succeeded because our intervention was regarded as an independent arbitration. It is time for the Government to set up a procedure to ensure an independent assessment of not only compensation, but the whole procedure of designation. Environmentally sensitive areas should not be subject to the executive order of the Secretary of State. There ought to be local consultation.

I should be failing to represent the large parts of the Snowdonia national park and the farmers there if I did not point out that there is still much ill feeling about the change that farmers are being compelled to make from production — particularly bringing the hills into production — to ensuring conservation objectives. If those objectives are to be realised, the farmers need more advice and support, not less. They also need to be assured that there will be an independent element of assessment whenever their traditional practices are under threat.

7.30 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): The hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) has properly concentrated on the main part of the Bill, which is the provision in clause 1 which enables the Government to charge for advisory services. I, too, wish to concentrate on that aspect of the Bill.

Hon. Members have outlined the many causes of anxiety that stem from that policy change. It is right that at a time of increasing surplus there is likely to be constraints on the real incomes of farmers. It is right that we see a high level of borrowing on the part of agriculture which is matched by diminution of land values. There will be further problems in future. As there are surpluses, it is inevitable that farmers will seek fresh products. It is inevitable that they will seek to identify further alternative uses for their land. In addition, there is much more cost-consciousness now than five or 10 years ago.

There are anxieties and it is right that they are brought to the attention of the Minister, but there is another issue which we cannot overlook. We are in a time of surplus, and it would be surprising if policies appropriate to times of scarcity were not reviewed. Surplus is a reason for re-assessing our charging policy, and that is a powerful consideration. We must not forget that we are dealing with commercial activities.

I have listened to Opposition Members and it seems that they regard agriculture as a form of public service, which it is in one sense for what the farmers do for the nation is essential. However, we are talking about commercial activities, and I find nothing inappropriate in the concept that commercial activities should be prepared to shoulder some of the costs of development, research and advice.

There are many farmers in my constituency and, although I am conscious that there are those who find it difficult to meet some of the levels of charges, there are many profitable and successful farms. I find it difficult to say that they should not contribute to the costs of advice, development and research. Therefore, I cannot oppose the concept of shifting some of the responsibilities for financing these services to the producers.

It is desirable to study clause 1. Although my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) is not present, I feel that I should say that I share some of his anxieties. It is a somewhat dangerous part of the Bill. To begin with, it is an enabling clause, and no more than that. It enables the Minister to impose reasonable charges. What do we mean by "reasonable charges"? It has no meaning as a concept unless we apply criteria. If we defined that the charge should reflect a proportion of the cost of providing a specific service, that would be a yardstick. We might say that the charge should reflect a proportion of the overall cost of funding ADAS. To say simply that the Minister has the power to impose a reasonable charge is meaningless. I have always been against enabling legislation, so I should like to see a tighter definition of what we mean by "reasonable charges".

The Minister has told us today and on previous occasions that he does not propose to charge for animal welfare, conservation and rural diversification measures. I am glad of that. However, that restraint is no more than a self-imposed prohibition. As hon. Members have said,

Ministers are ephemeral beings—they come and go. No Minister can commit his successors. No Parliament can commit its successor. If it is right to exclude particular areas from charging, it is right to give statutory expression to that inhibition.

A proper distinction is to be drawn between charges which are for services redounding to the national welfare and which are justified on those grounds, and charges which are directed through the commercial profit of the producer. As for the former — charges which are justified by public interest — I do not see why the producer should pay them. Charges which are justified by recourse to the commercial prospects of the producer should be paid by the producer.

Clause 1(1)*(b)* gives the Minister power to provide services relating to

"the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside."

Clause 2 states that the Minister has power to charge for that service. These are services which are justifiable in terms of public interest, and I should like to see such services excluded from the charging power. I am adamantly opposed to delegating to any Minister the power to impose charges. We in the House have no control. We are surrendering control over charges. We are giving to the Minister, nice man as he is—the Minister of State is a charming fellow——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Withdraw.

Mr. Hogg: Withdraw, no. I do not wish to embarrass my right hon. Friend. We are giving the Minister power to impose any charge which he may wish to levy and, because we are not setting out the criteria, the imposition cannot be challenged. This is dangerous, because Ministers have an unhappy habit of using user charges as a covert form of taxation. Water charges are an example. We have debated them in the past and I wager that we shall do so again fairly soon—too soon, no doubt.

I am against covert taxation. I say to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State that the exercise of the charging policy should be by way of statutory instrument. I would not go as far as my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton, who spoke of the affirmative procedure. The statutory instrument is the appropriate way of dealing with charges.

Clause 9 is an imaginative step forward and one which obviously commends itself to the entire House.

Mr. Livsey: Really.

Mr. Hogg: Well, the Liberal party is the exception to most things. It will vote against the Bill on that ground, yet there is only one Liberal Member present; it will be a solitary vote.

I favour clause 9, and the Department is right to proceed with the voluntary approach. As the Minister said, the farming community is by far the best custodian of the interests of the countryside. However, I fear that the Bill does not take full account of the landlord-tenant position. My interpretation of the Bill is that it would be possible for the Minister to enter into a management agreement with one or other party to a leasing agreement. But the other party would not be party to the management agreement. We might find that an agreement between the landlord and the Minister or the tenant and the Minister redounded to the disadvantage of the other party who was in no sense privy to the agreement. That is a technical matter that I hope my right hon. Friend the Minister will consider in Committee.

Broadly, my right hon. Friend the Minister is right. The Bill marks an important step forward, and I am glad that it has the whole-hearted support of the House with the exception of the Liberal party, which for these purposes I do not count very high. I have reservations about the Bill which concern largely the lack of parliamentary control. However, it is an important measure and one that is justifiable on its merits. I hope that the House will give it a welcome.

7.40 pm

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): In the short time that is at my disposal I shall take up three issues that have been referred to by the hon. Members for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins), for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the last named having been in his place until a short time ago.

The value of any Agriculture Bill must be assessed according to two main criteria. The first objective is whether it makes any contribution to reducing the high cost of agricultural support from public funds. That should be one of the main purposes of such a Bill. Secondly, and more important, we must consider the extent to which any such Bill helps to evolve an agriculture and countryside policy, as opposed merely to a farming and food policy. These criteria represent two important strategic considerations.

That agricultural support is expensive on public funds is beyond dispute. In 1984, British agriculture produced £12·5 billion worth of output, but 25 per cent. of it was accounted for by public subsidy, and that was a great deal. In 1984-85, direct Exchequer support was over £1 billion. If the effect of the common agricultural policy, including the impact on consumer prices, is taken into account, the total subsidy to agriculture was £22,000 per farmer, or £7,000 per job in agriculture. I take these figures from *The Economist* of 3 November 1984.

Much of the subsidy has helped to inflate land values, thus making entry into farming more difficult. It has encouraged East Anglian grain prairies, to the detriment of conservation and the environment. The hon. Member for Dumfries told us about his journeys through the countryside, and wished to assure us that the land is in great shape. In 1946 there were 23,000 miles of hedgerow in East Anglia, but in 1985 only 9,000 miles remain. That is a serious statistic, and there are others to accompany it.

Our long-standing and expensive framework of support maintains farming as a section of the British economy that is responsible for employing only 2·7 per cent. of the labour force and producing 2·5 per cent. of gross domestic product. It is evident to me that public support cannot continue on this scale under any Government. There is bound to be retrenchment and adaptation to new circumstances.

The trick that must be worked is to reduce the large sums, both direct and indirect, under the CAP that are spent on producing surpluses. Increasingly, money must be channelled into the preservation, improvement and employment capacities of the countryside. If this can be done with the minimum of dislocation, it will be to the benefit of British agriculture and the economy.

As I read it, the Bill does two things. It enables the Minister to charge for certain services. Secondly, it

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empowers Ministers to designate certain environmentally sensitive areas within which grants may be paid to farmers who agree to adopt farming practices that are consistent with conservation. In effect, the Bill aims at paying farmers to love the land, as opposed to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which subsidises farmers for not being subsidised. I believe that the latter approach should be supported and that the former should be rejected emphatically.

I shall cut through the part of the Bill that deals with charges because the arguments have already been advanced by others and more effectively and eloquently than any rehearsal on my part could achieve. It is bound to be the responsibility of a Government to look for economies in any service. Any Government must try to ensure that there are lower costs at all times, while maintaining efficiency. However, if there are savings to be made in the agriculture budget, the service area is not the place to look. That is wrong in principle. We must look elsewhere. Many farmers who rarely use the services that we are discussing, but who need to do so from time to time, will be less inclined to use the independent service than ever before. What is to happen to the less well-off farmer who can ill afford to buy advice on the commercial market?

An opportunity has been lost fundamentally to re-examine the research and advice service and to adapt it to agriculture, which must adjust its capacity in a market where supply has increased faster than demand. A valuable opportunity has been lost. There is no longer pressure on farmers to maintain ever-increasing levels of production.

The new need is to adjust, diversify and conserve. The farming community will need every ounce of guidance and independent advice. The changes proposed in clause 1 will be an obstacle to that end.

When I read clause 9(1)*(a)*, I found that the Minister would have the power to designate certain areas. Sub-paragraph *(a)* states:

"to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an area".

That gives the Minister power to do almost anything if he wishes to intervene. Subsection (2) states that no order can be made unless it has the Treasury's consent. That consent will not be given very often. There will be a period of controversy between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Treasury on the one side, while on the other there will be controversy between the Ministry and the conservation organisations. I welcome clause 9, but I think that subsection (2) puts the damper on it, as the Treasury will put a damper on anything.

The initiative is long overdue, especially for East Anglia. I have quoted a statistic to show how the East Anglian countryside has altered.

I must stress that it has altered significantly, and for the worse. In fact, things have gone too far. Larger and larger farms use larger and larger quantities of nitrogen fertilisers, which create unsaleable surpluses, pollute the water, endanger health and threaten wildlife. As I have said, thousands of miles of hedgerows have been removed. Hundreds of acres of semi-natural woodlands have been grubbed out. There has been massive damage to the Broads, which damage has been well documented. If the trend continues, it may pass the point of no return. In both Norfolk and Suffolk, species of wildlife have declined. There is no doubt that the growth and spread of commercial agriculture in East Anglia has had an extremely serious impact on the countryside.

That is why I welcome clause 9. It would be churlish now to point out its imperfections; the time to do so will be in Committee. The valuable principle behind the clause is that at last we have found a way of channelling into the countryside money which is divorced from food production and the creation of unsaleable surpluses. That is a valuable point.

I have dealt with what I consider to be the disadvantages in the first half of clause 1 on services and the necessary environmental changes. British agriculture has changed fundamentally. We have to adapt to a new future, and I believe that agriculture has to adjust to a new market place. Inevitably there will be some dislocation as that adjustment is made. One cannot encourage farmers from producing and then suddenly bring down the curtain and say, "That is enough." That is why we need the advisory services and the other powers to expand employment in the countryside without expanding food production for a market that is already satiated.

7.51 pm

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): This is an important Bill for the countryside and agriculture. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), I believe that the heart of it lies not in clause 1 but in clause 9, which deals with the environmentally sensitive areas. That is the most significant step in the Bill. The Bill starkly demonstrates the dilemma that now faces agriculture as it struggles to redefine its purpose and to find its way in an age of agricultural surpluses.

All farmers know the dilemma that is facing them. They can no longer expect to be subsidised for producing products that are already in growing surplus and for which there are no markets. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) dwelt on the point that farmers are being subsidised for surpluses. They must be helped to find a way through that dilemma. Farmers also know that they must use their skill to conserve and enhance the wildlife and landscape of their farms. It is true that there has been considerable progress towards their being more sensitive to the environment. At the same time as finding a new way, farmers must maintain prosperity in the countryside in the interests of the rural community and of conservation.

The problem has arisen of how to blend the different aims and problems that are facing farmers. The market, conservation and prosperity have become uneasy allies. Clause 9 is a bold attempt towards that objective. It seeks to find harmony in farming in special areas. The Minister deserves praise for getting clause 9 and for winning support from the Common Market. That is a great achievement for the Government and for the Ministry. We should recognise and welcome it.

At the same time, the Minister has presided over a period of huge transformation not only in farming in Britain but in the Ministry. It is no longer the myopic producer of food. It is moving towards a better balance. During the past two years, we have seen a big step towards a wiser Ministry with a wider role. I hope that it can develop that trend of stewardship in the countryside. Who knows, perhaps one day we may see it as a Ministry for countryside affairs.

Before looking closely at clause 9, it is worth recording the history leading to that clause, because it is significant. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was a landmark in the progress of our attitude towards the countryside and towards clause 9. It arose largely from the growing concern that we all share about the destruction of habitat in the countryside. There is no need to repeat some of the statistics, because they are well known. Paradoxically, by concentrating on the best sites, the 1981 Act drew our attention to the need for conservation in the wider countryside. It also concentrated the mind on how to pay for such conservation. I think that all of us agree that the provisions in the Act were over-generous.

The burden of surpluses, to which I have already referred, threw the subsidies that sustain and encourage those surpluses into disrepute. That led to the imaginative and important step being taken in the scheme to protect the Broads. The Broads cover a far wider area than the sites of special scientific interest envisaged in the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The scheme was a move towards a far more sensible type of protection and management agreement that could be paid for. The significant point about the Broads scheme is that it brought together the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment for the first time in looking at how to conserve the countryside and enhance traditional farming.

Support will be given in the Bill, not just to agricultural output but to conserving the most valued qualities of the environmentally sensitive areas. At this point I make a plea, which was raised by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). It is ridiculous that we should be landed with jargon in the words "environmentally sensitive areas". We should use more imagination and gusto in finding names. Why not call them "heritage" or "stewardship" areas? *[Interruption.]* We are talking about a proper balance of stewardship in the countryside. If the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) can think of something better, let him have a go, or does he prefer "ESAs"?

Several points in clause 9 need attention. All of us would expect to have more sites than the five or six proposed sites. It is sensible to have a trial in a few areas so that we can work out what arrangements will be best for them. We do not want that trial to last too long. We want it to be pursued vigorously so that we can have a significant number of sites. For example, why should we not also have a site in Scotland and in the Western Isles where there is a conflict between land improvement and conservation?

The problem of funding has been mentioned. Initially, it is not the level of funding that matters but the guarantee of continuity. When we are launched into the programme I should like the Government to ensure that the measures are carried through over a long period. That is what is needed. At the same time, we need to know what will be the role of the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission. It is important that they are fully consulted in the selection of the sites.

The management package is most important. We shall have to ensure that the sites are positively managed with effective measures. Management will have to vary between the different sites. For example, the requirements for grazing on the Broads are different from the requirements of the Somerset levels. We shall have to look closely at each site to ascertain the best management methods.

We need to consider what should happen if farmers within the area opt out. We have to deal with that and win their approval and support. If we cannot do that, we must ensure that measures are taken so that the integrity of the area is preserved. We also need to have penalties for when agreements are broken.

At the same time we have to consider what will happen to our ordinary agriculture grants. If a farmer in a sensitive area wishes to go ahead with drainage or some other agricultural method that would be bad for what we are trying to achieve, we should have to give clear directions about agriculture grants.

Those are specifically matters for the Committee, but they need to be mentioned now. The practical problems have to be thought through if the ESAs are to flourish.

I should like to refer to the relationship of the ESAs with agriculture outside those areas. There is no doubt that farming is going through a massive change in its prospects and attitudes. It is facing a crisis. Farming has had to change and will have to change further, but that change is all the harder for having been too long delayed. A new framework for farming has to be evolved. As we all know, there have been numerous suggestions on the routes and methods that farming should take. However, it is fair to state, with some humility, that none of us quite knows how to proceed or the route that farming should take. How do we control surpluses and yet retain fair prosperity in the countryside? The answer eludes us as yet. I believe that it eludes the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Our torch is dim in that uncertain area and we must edge our way forward. The importance of the ESAs is that they give a direction in which we can go.

I should like to ask for two things in a new agriculture policy. We must have open debate from the Government as well as a competent and rigorous examination of all the options for the future of farming. However, today we have an easier task. We can all welcome the concept of the ESAs. We must all act effectively to turn that concept into reality. There will be a lesson to be learnt from the way in which we do that—the way in which we put clause 9 into effect. The lesson from what we do will be for the rest of agriculture in the wider countryside.

8.2 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I am hoping to catch Mr. Speaker's eye during the Northern Ireland debate, so I shall be brief.

Fortunately, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) made a speech that makes it possible for me to be even briefer. One of the litmus tests of the Conservative Front Bench's good faith is whether the hon. Gentleman will be a member of the Committee. Having heard his speech, I believe that it would be absolutely scandalous if he were kept off the Committee. He has raised many matters of cross-party interest that worry a great many people. I hope that I do not do him too much damage by saying that.

I should like to return to the subject raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch)—clause 9. We welcome "environmentally sensitive areas", but there is the question of money. I agree that £6 million is not to be sneezed at, but what about the continuity of

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funding and the need to maintain farm landscapes? It is no earthly good having any sort of stop-go attitude to the matter.

The Minister intervened when I was intervening in the speech of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Munro). Clause 9 contains the words:

"No area shall be designated . . . unless the Treasury have consented".

What is the mechanism? Do Treasury Ministers solemnly veto sites that Agriculture Ministers, after consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council, believe merit ESA treatment? The Minister, who is always very quick, referred me to the Agriculture Act 1957 and to the Agriculture Act 1970. Clause 29 of the 1970 Act states:

"The appropriate authority may with the approval of the Treasury by scheme provide for the making . . . of grants".

However, the Act is referring to farm capital grants. That is general approval of a scheme and not, as it says in our Bill, particular Treasury approval to projects.

If the Minister interrupted, he must have the 1957 Act in front of him. I have, and I cannot for the life of me find which part of the Act he is referring to. If the right hon. Gentleman has it in front of him, perhaps he can explain his intervention. The Minister does not give way. That is the difficulty. He gets a note from the clever civil servant in the Box——

Mr. Gummer: I have reserved a long section of my speech to deal not only with that part of the hon. Gentleman's speech but the rest, and I should like him to wait until then.

Mr. Dalyell: I shall hold the Minister to that and listen with attention to his explanation because my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich and many others are extremely curious about an extraordinary Treasury concern. There may be an explanation for it.

The question of advice on conservation matters being free of charge is a grey area. My worry is that farmers will break the habit of going to ADAS. In practice too often they will go for advice to chemicals, pesticides and other related firms. That is likely to happen. If charges are levied for one thing, they will spill over into other areas. Small farmers in particular will get out of the habit of going to ADAS. My question is: do Ministers see that there is any danger in the scenario that I have described, in farmers becoming more dependent on chemicals and pesticides firms, which understandably have axes to grind?

Mr. Home Robertson: Oh, yes.

Mr. Dalyell: My hon. Friend is a farmer, and a very good farmer, too.

I ask the Government: should agriculture research priorities by much less closely coupled with the priorities of the agriculture and food industries? Publicly funded research is independent of unwelcome pressures to which privately funded research can be subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) has gone on endlessly and rightly about Lasswade. That is an example of what we are getting at.

Another example is the break-up of the Soil Survey of England and Wales. The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon referred to it. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will remember that I asked her at Question Time about 27 posts in the Soil Survey. One cannot just take away 27 posts and expect them to be put back later when they are needed. My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas) made it clear, as all of us know, that once one breaks up organisations such as the Soil Survey, one cannot expect them to be put back easily. I hope that we shall not have a system of "research capacity for sale". It is a completely different type of organisation. That is not what has benefited British agriculture over decades.

Finally, I do not believe in contract work by contract staff and short-term appointees. I think that all of us have had a good briefing from Wendi Harrison of the Institution of Professional Civil Servants. I do not doubt that Wendi Harrison and others have already argued with Ministry officials that research taken on can best be carried out by properly managed and deployed permanent staff. Do Ministers agree?

Having been so brief, I hope that a good word will be put in to the Speaker for me for the Northern Ireland debate.

8.8 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): It is always a pleasure to be called immediately after the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not take up too many of his arguments, although some of my later comments will touch on matters that he raised.

When the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) referred to morale in the Ministry, I cast my mind back to the state of morale in agriculture in 1979 when the Conservatives came to power and a dynamic, aggressive Minister took over responsibility for it. In the intervening years, there has been an immense change in the industry. In 1979, people were asking, "Do this Government want an agriculture industry?" My constituents wanted to know whether the Government wanted an apple industry. The incoming Minister replied, in effect, "Yes we do. Do you want to be it? If so, get on with it. If not, get out." The industry took the hint, changed its attitude, became constructive and started to work, and it achieved such enormous success that we now have other problems for which the industry cannot be blamed.

Since then, however, the industry has suffered another loss of confidence and morale which tempted an arable farmer in my constituency to write to me at the weekend. The letter does not relate to the Bill, but it illustrates current feelings in agriculture. He reminds me of

"the unpalatable fact that agriculture is going into a very deep and potentially disastrous recession, and with it will fall the ancillary industries supporting agriculture—which in percentage terms is a significant part of the population and again will lead to de-population of the rural areas and increase unemployment as well."

My constituent is a good farmer and he echoes my own sentiments. One recalls the damage that was done in the late 1970s when the Labour Government played the green pound issue to the detriment of agriculture, the spin-off being the virtual loss of the agricultural implement and tractor business, with enormous consequences in employment for the brass and iron founding industries and the steel forging businesses in the west midlands which have still not been retrieved.

The general discussion of the Bill today has overlooked the nub of the matter. It is a marketing Bill which seeks to give the industry a recharge, a kick in the direction of positive thought which may have been forgotten when the

industry wondered where it was going. Let the House be under no illusions about this. There is immense scope for the development of the industry. On import substitution, one has only to look on the shelves of the shops and supermarkets and consider the origins of the products on sale.

Mr. Hardy: Hear, hear.

Mr. Shepherd: The hon. Gentleman rightly says, "Hear, hear." One recalls the demise of the canned pigmeat and cooked ham industry. All those products are now imported. There is an enormous potential increase for the British agriculture and food industry working in harmony and bending its mind constructively to that approach. There has been a great improvement in British bacon since the charter bacon scheme was introduced, but the galling fact is that we are still only 44 per cent. self-sufficient in bacon, which means that we are 56 per cent. importers. We tend to take that situation for granted. There is a huge amount of work to be done not in abstract research but in getting the commodity right so that people buy it in preference to the imported product.

Due to the other problems that existed, it is perhaps insufficiently appreciated that my right hon. Friend the Minister has sought to sustain, and seeks through the Bill to sustain, the marketing impulse given to the industry by his predecessor in office. I congratulate him on that and on taking the opportunity of this important Bill to carry that process forward. I hope that the industry, through the Food from Britain organisation, which is modified in the Bill, will take up the baton and run with all the constructiveness that it can mount because it is vital that in its present dilemma the industry should turn its mind constructively to ways in which it can better satisfy its markets at home and the export opportunities which undoubtedly exist. This relates not just to agricultural production from the fields but to the need for an integrated structure for the production of foodstuffs that people want to buy.

Today's debate has centred mainly on clause 1, in largely negative terms, and I understand the basic negativity with which a change of this kind can be addressed. To find out what my constituents thought, I conducted a straw poll in my area and I found a refreshing air of realism in the bazaars. There is a feeling that it is reasonable to pay for advice which leads to commercial enhancement. The advice sought is often used to cross-check advice from other sources. There was a distinct air or realism in that respect. I am glad, however, that my right hon. Friend the Minister clarified the position in relation to non-wealth-enhancing, change-facilitating advice—on conservation, rural diversification, and so on—as I was worried about that aspect on first reading the Bill. Nevertheless, I repeat the question asked with such great eloquence by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). Why does the Bill provide that the Minister may bring forward charges for that type of service? It worries me that that should be so.

I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Minister decides on his charging policies he will bear in mind the position of the people at the sharp end of the changes—small farmers at the marginal end of the business, farmers in the hills and in the less-favoured areas—because those people are most at risk. For some time it has almost seemed that the law for the agriculture industry is:

"Unto every one that hath shall be given . . . but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

I am worried by that situation and by the continued drift of the industry into ever larger units because I believe that the basic health of the country lies in recognition of the fact that one does not harvest before one has sown, and the further we take people away from the source of sowing, the less that fact will be realised. We need to have people connected with the land who understand that basic truth about where things come from and how.

The Agricultural and Food Research Council has been ably led by Lord Selborne in this period of change, but he has a reasonable complaint that the priorities board did not report before he and his advisers had to decide which way the research industry should go. I hope that we can be given some idea today of when the priorities board will report as it seems to have been in cogitation for aeons. I believe that that is unreasonable at a time when changes have to be planned and major decisions taken about the future of research.

I hope that the Government will also bear in mind the very reasonable question raised by the National Farmers Union. The AFRC has been most constructive in setting out to win funds from industry to create what I suspect will be a far more market-oriented and practical research programme related to the need of industry to sell its products. The NFU would like an assurance that if the AFRC is successful in getting industry to cough up for the cost of applied research, Government funding will not be equivalently reduced. That would be demoralising, and if the NFU steps in to fill the gap, it is only reasonable that it should not be asked to fill an ever larger gap.

I thank my right hon. Friend and congratulate him on what he has achieved in respect of structures, directives and regulations as proposed in clause 9. My hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle) has already referred to the importance of this matter, and any scheme that emerges must be simple and straightforward. Such schemes should not become a bureaucratic stranglehold on those who are trying to operate their businesses in these areas.

The industry must declare its own commitment to the future and put its money where its mouth is. It will not be good enough simply to participate on the side—there must be total involvement. That will lead to an agriculture industry which, with the help of the Bill, will be far better able to cope with the changes and to chart its way forward into the future.

8.21 pm

Mr. Richard Livsey (Brecon and Radnor): I should first declare an interest, albeit tenuous, in that at one time I was a member of a commercial firm that advised the Minister about 20 years ago.

Liberal Members welcome clause 9, but our main thrust is against clause 1, particularly as it affects research, advice and development. It is fair to ask what the Government's strategy is, what the plan is, where agricultural research is heading and what will happen to leading research. The rationale behind those questions is difficult to ferret out, but ferret it out we must. Is it the result of a policy of cash limits and indiscriminate cuts, or have these moves been carefully planned and selected by the Government in order to cut specific research?

[Mr. Richard Livsey]

Reference has already been made to the priorities board and the inability to obtain information that it undoubtedly holds.

It is forecast that between 1985-86 and 1986-87 there will be a decrease of 482 people employed in agricultural research. I estimate that there will be a net reduction of £5·6 million as a result of the application of cash limits on research, and other hon. Members have already referred to cuts amounting to £10 million or to research funding from private sources.

Those factors are known, but it is equally valid to refer to a number of instances in which research is being, and has been, affected. There have been cuts at the Compton research station, which has lost all its research on metabolic profiles even though on a world basis it was outstanding in that regard. We have now seen the loss of the liver fluke research programme, even though this is the worst year for liver fluke for 15 years. The research programme on anabolic steroids at the Bristol food research institute has been terminated, and fruit storage research work at East Malling has also been stopped.

There have been cuts at the Welsh plant breeding station, with the elimination of the barley breeding programme and the chemistry department, and the loss of 23 posts. The plant breeding institute at Cambridge has until now been carrying out invaluable work on drought-resistant varieties of wheat, and that has been extremely relevant to the problems of the Third world. That programme has been completely cut. There has been the proposed closure of the Lasswade veterinary investigation centre, and 75 jobs will disappear on 1 April 1986. Only 15 per cent. of the work at Lasswade comprises research and development, and 85 per cent. is statutory business such as testing for brucella, maedi-visna and sheep scab as well as protein and salmonella. There have been other closures at Shardlow Hall, and other hon. Members have already referred to the fact that the Soil Survey budget has been cut by half. That is totally unacceptable. The Soil Survey is for all time, and it is important to know what is happening in soil research in the interests of agriculture and other industries.

There will be closures at Llanishen, Cardiff with a complete termination of scientific research. The same applies to Bangor, with a loss in total by 1 April 1986 of 200 ADAS scientific and support staff. That is the tip of the iceberg. I have learnt from the veterinary profession of the possible closure of veterinary investigation centres at Cardiff, Gloucester, Chester, Northampton and Leeds. If that happens, we shall see the demise of a great service.

There are at present tremendous options for research, and we have heard about contracts for agricultural research. We do not believe that that is the right way to proceed. The plant breeding institute at Cambridge is at present up for grabs, probably to the chemical industries associated with agriculture. A much more acceptable option is the maintenance of independently based research.

What has happened to the possibility of using our expertise on Third world research, where there is great scope for low technology agriculture to assist Third-world countries? International co-operation is a worthwhile objective, although that is not necessarily specific to many farming areas of Britain.

As for ADAS, there will be immediate cuts of £4 million, and 145 posts will go by March 1986. It is forecast that the cuts will rise to £8 million by 1987-88, with a reduction of 480 staff in the next 15 months. That is a 17 per cent. staffing reduction. ADAS is under severe strain, and we should reject the rationalisation proposed in clause 1.

The Government hope to raise £16·5 million in 1986-87, but their own advisers now say that it will be possible to raise only £11 million. It is hoped to raise that money at a time when farm incomes nationally are forecast to drop by 35 per cent. this year. This cannot be the time to try to raise money from advice. The wealthier farmer will be able to pay for it, but the smaller family farmer who really needs it will be unable to afford it. There must be special dispensation for small farms in the less-favoured areas.

We support the proposals on Food from Britain but feel that not enough financial support is being given in that direction. The proposed £2·5 million a year for three years is totally inadequate compared with the support given by other European countries, particularly France, to the marketing of food.

We must make a positive effort to attract more labour in the countryside and more workers in rural industries. If the Bill will enable that it should be welcomed.

It is not our policy to rate land or buildings and I refute that. I support the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) who has drawn attention to the need for independent arbitration in national parks. A great part of my constituency is national park and many problems are coming up there which need independent arbitration.

Some mention has been made of environmentally sensitive areas. Obviously those are very important, but we should not lose sight of the fact that the farmers in those areas have cared for the countryside and are good custodians of it. We also need to look at "environment development areas" in some of those wastelands which are agricultural and farming black spots of Britain where perhaps some positive efforts could be made to improve the environment.

Mr. Gummer: Will the hon. Gentleman explain whether what he has just told the House about Liberal party policy is Liberal party policy? Was the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) wrong when he said that agricultural land should also be subject to planning consent and control; that that is Liberal policy; that the anomalies have existed for a long time; and that the planning permission requirement would apply to buildings and, for example, to the removal of hedgerows and woodland? Is it the hon. Gentleman or the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey who makes the policy?

Mr. Livsey: That is certainly not Liberal party agricultural policy. My hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) may have been expressing a view.

Our amendment refers to research and advice. We welcome clause 9 on environmental matters. We do not want to preside over the decimation of a world-renowned research service and advisory service which is of great excellence with highly qualified scientists, some of whom have already emigrated to strengthen research efforts in other countries. Farming is at the crossroads. According

to the Green Paper which has been published in Europe we are to look at new crops, enterprises and directions for agriculture. This is no time to cut our research and development programmes. We should maintain and improve farm profits, perhaps through lower input farming systems, and we will not have the research facilities to research that type of agriculture. In particular, we need research in environmentally sensitive areas to find out what systems we can promote for that.

France is increasing its agricultural research programme by 10 per cent. and, in particular, putting large efforts into biotechnology. In comparison, our response is to cut back on research. This is not the time to do that and that is why we have tabled our amendments.

8.33 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I shall be brief so that my hon. Friends will have an opportunity to speak. I am happy to follow what the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey) said in his concluding phrases about a crossroads in agriculture, perhaps a watershed. Britain and the rest of Europe are reaching a point in agriculture where change is happening increasingly rapidly. The change can be summed up—whether it comes about by supply control, as in the dairy sector, or by price support reductions in other sectors — as a contraction of the markets for many traditional agricultural products. There has been a consensus in this debate that, in these circumstances, there will be a need for new products, for lower input-cost systems in agriculture, for greater emphasis on marketing and on value added products. Moreover, as the Bill makes clear, all these economic changes are happening in a period of growing concern about the relationship between agriculture and the environment.

What will be the Bill's impact on this situation? I am bound to add my voice to the concern expressed by several hon. Members about one particular aspect of the Bill—the funding of agricultural research and development. I follow closely the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), and I also follow what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Sir P. Hawkins). This represents a broad range of criticism, to which I hope the Government will be sensitive.

It is surely obvious that in rapid structural change in agriculture there is a need for a strong research and development contribution in order to help us through the necessary adjustments. My hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Mr. Body) was correct in what he said about the role of agricultural research and development in the expansion of output since the war. But it must be remembered that this exploitation of agricultural research and development occurred because of the high support prices that were being provided. Now that this is being withdrawn it does not follow that we must also cut back on agricultural research and development—rather, we should strengthen it to help us cope with the new situations in which agriculture finds itself.

My right hon. Friend the Minister made great play of the fact that Britain spends £200 million a year on agricultural research and development. I must make it clear that I support the concept of charging which is embodied in the Bill, mainly because it will bring about a closer link between the scientists and the industry, which will be in the interests of both sides. The figure of £200 million sounds a large sum, but how do we know that it is enough? How do we know that it is not perhaps too much? None of us in this House is in a scientific position to define which lines of agricultural research and development we should pursue, so I shall not follow hon. Members who have come up with their favourite projects, usually from their constituencies — indeed, I have no particular constituency interest in what I am saying.

It is notoriously difficult to decide the size and direction of research and development budgets, but we can apply three external indicators which I tried to define when I spoke in our debate on science policy in June.

The first indicator that we could use to guide us is how current and projected spending on research and development compares with our past spending. In this respect we have recently seen two major cuts in the AFRC — first, the cut in DES funding, and now the cut in commissioned research funding, amounting in the period 1983-88 to a cut of the order of one quarter. The consequences have been pointed out and they are serious — disorganisation and demoralisation. I draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State the recent report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the serious consequences of a similar process in universities in the early 1980s. For I fear that the Government are making the same mistake again. The question that the Government have to face is this—if it was necessary to spend X in 1983 on agricultural research and development, how can circumstances have changed so much as to justify X minus 25 per cent. only five years later?

A second possible way of answering the question how much we should spend on agricultural research and development is to ask what proportion of the GDP is being spent on research and development in that sector and how it compares with the share of GDP contributed by that sector. The annual review of Government-funded research and development for 1984 suggests that this consideration has been a factor behind the Government's policy. That review, based on OECD figures, claimed:

> "The United Kingdom spends more in GDP terms than other countries on agricultural research and development."

There has been a hot and furious debate about this in Government and academic circles and the claim made in the annual review has, I believe, been successfully rebutted—and I challenge the compilers of the annual review which is now being put together to stand by their words of last year or to retreat from them.

A third indicator for research and development budgets is provided by our competitors: how does our spending compare with that of others?

A recent editorial in *Nature* records recent developments in France, including an increase in agricultural research and development funding. The article states:

> "The French policy seems to be that farmers should be helped to greater productivity and flexibility in the face of the threatened reduction of an admittedly artificial demand for food; the British, on the other hand, think that farmers should not be helped to be more efficient, or to be able to ring the changes on the crops they grow—or that they should pay the cost of the research that will enable them to remain competitive. The truth is that while the technology of agriculture is on the threshold of changes more radical than there have been since neolithic times, the French line is by far the safest."

I agree with that analysis.

Agriculture is moving into a new era. It will need all the intellectual resources that it can obtain to help it face new circumstances and the redoubled competition. I

[Mr. Robert Jackson]

welcome the opportunity that the Bill affords for the introduction of such new resources, but I remain deeply concerned about the pace and the scale of the current reductions in the Government's contribution to agricultural research and development.

8.41 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), because I can make up for a slight offence in September when I went to his constituency to campaign with the prospective Labour candidate. My experience in the hon. Gentleman's constituency illustrates the developing problems in rural Britain.

The Labour party campaign bus was a double-decker vehicle. As we drove along the bus routes in Wantage, we learned to duck, for fear of our heads being cut off. The top deck of the bus was full of the fruits of British trees — conkers, berries, nuts, branches and the occasional spot of blood from those who came into collision by seeking to address the hon. Gentleman's constituents when not looking where the bus was going. So rare was it for a bus to travel those leafy lanes that the trees had grown to become an obstruction. In south Yorkshire I have watched the decline of transport services, and I shudder at that graphic illustration. I regret that I did not let the hon. Gentleman know that I was to visit his constituency, but it was a last-minute arrangement.

I shall not join those who fawned upon the Minister and congratulated him with effusion. Reluctantly, I accept that we shall not go into the Lobby tonight to vote, but I hope that my hon. Friends who serve on the Standing Committee will demand more information. I regret that I shall probably not serve on that Committee because I have other fish to fry and I am interested in other matters, but I hope that my hon. Friends will obtain the details that the House should have been given today.

The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and others spoke of their hesitation about and dislike of enabling legislation. They are right. The Minister can tell us that £5 million or £6 million will result from the charges, but he cannot say what the charges will be. Something is wrong with the Department's mathematics. If the final sum is known, the Department must have some idea of the charges that will produce that total. The hon. Member for Grantham is right to attack enabling legislation. We are right to demand that the Minister gives the House the information.

What charges do the Government have in mind? Early in the last general election campaign I was in a thinly populated part of my constituency when a farmer said: "Peter, I am not going to vote for thee." I was deeply distressed, because I think that some farmers in my constituency vote for me. I asked him why, and he said that one of my hon. Friends had said on a radio programme that the average net farm income in 1982 had increased by about 43 per cent. My farmer was cross that a Labour politician should say that average farm incomes had increased by 43 per cent., until I explained that some farmers' incomes had increased by 86 per cent., but that the incomes of others like himself had not increased. That seemed to mollify him.

That dairy farmer had a relatively small holding on the urban fringe. The Minister should be aware of the problems of such farmers consequent upon the devastation of our industrial economy. If our young people have nowhere to work and little opportunity, they will become a nuisance. They will commit crimes. The Minister has seen the effect on some farms of the wholesale destruction of youth employment. That should be commanding the Government's attention. They should not be fiddling about with charges for farm advisers, who are desperately needed by the lower income agriculturists, who might otherwise have to rely on advice from chemical companies, for example.

Perhaps light-heartedly, it has been said that the Government should put a tax on nitrogenous fertilisers. That might be useful. It would reduce costs and might produce a surplus! We should be concerned, not about charges for advice, but about the enormous and rapidly accelerating cost of intervention. The amount for which the Minister is scratching, and for which the House is providing in enabling legislation, is neglible compared with the enormous cost of surpluses. The Government's priorities are misplaced.

The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) talked about the massive increase in exports. British food is good, and our food distribution industry has enormous potential. The Minister should develop the temporary interest which his predecessor displayed. If he does, he will come up against the rock which the hon. Member for Hereford failed to perceive — that competing countries have Governments who are much more concerned about their own economic interests than this Government are. My experience in my constituency bears out that opinion. If the British Government were as keen as the French Government, they would not be cutting research, but would be developing our commercial prospects.

I bitterly regret the choice of the title "environmentally sensitive areas". It is as if only a few selected parts of Britain are environmentally important. The Standing Committee's first task will be to persuade the Government that it is a clumsy, manipulative title which reveals the Government as cynical. Comments have been made by Government Members, but I have no faith that they will follow their voices with votes in Committee.

This is a sop to the environment lobby. If it were not, the Minister would have had much more to say about the change of heart and the new priority. I have not forgotten the fact that the Government have been eager to get in the headlines, claiming to be the Green party and the people who care about conservation, but in reality they have blocked more moves than they have initiated — *[Interruption.]* That is true, but I shall not expand on it as I know that other hon. Members wish to speak. If the Minister wants to demonstrate that the Government have given priority to conservation, he should give us some evidence of it.

I have some questions for the Minister. First, if a landowner or farmer decides not to agree with the Government in seeking to protect an environmentally sensitive area, will he still be able to obtain one of the gamut of grants that have helped to disfigure and destroy much of our ecological heritage? Secondly, will the Minister be prepared to take a more generous view, or to persuade the Treasury to take a more generous view, of proposals from the NCC and the Countryside Commission? I believe that we may be establishing a trigger mechanism for areas that are currently or

immediately in danger but the small scale that the Minister apparently envisages will not give nature conservation the vision or capacity to apply long-term considerations.

In so far as the measure represents an advance, I welcome it. That is why I shall join my hon. Friends in refraining from voting against it. Although I may not serve on the Standing Committee, I and thousands of people who are concerned about conservation will read its reports in order to glean the facts that have not yet been presented tonight and to hear the Minister's defence of a proposition in the Bill that will represent a valuable step forward only if it is backed by the finance and sense of priority that are desperately needed.

If the measure founders, it will embarrass the Government. That would not cause me much regret, but it would imperil the new dialogue and improved relationship that has been developed during the past few years between those who subscribe to the cause of conservation and our agriculture industry. We must ensure that rural depopulation is brought to an end and that our landscape and ecology are further protected. If the Bill helps us to do that it will deserve our support, but we must first hear much more about it.

8.52 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I am happy to support the Bill, but I hope to speak as briefly as possible so that Conservative Members who have a genuine constituency interest and who wish to raise points on behalf of their constituents can contribute to the debate.

I particularly welcome the assurance from my right hon. Friend the Minister that there will be no charges for conservation, rural diversification and animal welfare advice. When I met my Shropshire NFU county executive on Friday afternoon, it was clear that there was concern about the way that charge levels would be introduced and further monitored. I very much hope that my hon. Friend the Minister has noted the concern expressed by hon. Members. I agree with them when they say that they hope that in future a statutory instrument will be used instead of leaving things open-ended.

With regard to the funding of the AFRC, many of the farming interests feel that the industry's practical needs are not adequately represented, particularly on the policy review body. I hope that that point will be considered seriously. If cuts are to be applied, it is essential that bodies such as the Royal Agricultural Society and United Kingdom Agricultural Supply Trade Association Ltd. should be consulted. When it comes to adjusting the way that agricultural research is conducted, it is vital to consider the research values of individual projects and to ensure that we do not go for convenience cuts just because they fit a particular block of expenditure.

It is equally important that the Government should deliver their promise to those of us who support the Bill that the science Vote will not be eroded and that the research that is publicly funded through universities and MAFF stations will not be cut. That would belie agriculture's contribution to applied research. It needs to see the Government keeping faith with scientific research in such stations.

I am particularly concerned about access to advice and information for small farmers. Those of us with agricultural constituencies will want to compare the services offered by MAFF with those offered by the Department of Trade and Industry. I understand that advice is offered to the small entrepreneur free of charge, and that should also apply to the small farmer. Some sort of acreage relativity would not go amiss in many rural areas. I welcome the Bill and the diversification of incentives. I hope that the Treasury has taken that on board, particularly with regard to business expansion schemes.

Much criticism has been levelled at agriculture, particularly in relation to the environment. However, having viewed some of the more wayward television programmes, I suspect that one or two bad farmers have been singled out as against the many thousands who contribute substantially to the betterment of our environment. In my county, the Country Landowners Association has gone a long way towards providing private conservation specialists to advise farmers who look after the countryside. Admittedly, many of those farmers have inherited their land but many of them are conscious of the need to pass on to their descendents the very countryside that we all enjoy. In that respect, the assurance given by my right hon. Friend that the Government will tread carefully over the establishment of environmentally sensitive areas is welcome. We do not want to plunge in and place an unnatural burden on the industry.

My speech has had to be brief because of the pressure of time and, sadly, the wasting of time by some hon. Members. I shall conclude so as to allow Conservative Members who have genuine agricultural concerns to speak.

8.57 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I hope that the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) will accept that the debate involves not only agriculture but the environment. Consequently, there are hon. Members on both sides of the House who are genuinely concerned.

When I saw the amendment on the Order Paper I thought that the Liberal party had had a temporary aberration. There are Liberal Members who have cause to support environmental issues, but I was very disappointed with the speech of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). The cause of conservation and the environment has suffered a severe setback because of the Liberal party's apparent desertion—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman can read his speech tomorrow and judge it, just as we did when we listened to it.

I happen to think that clause 9 represents a major advance. I understand that the Secretary of State put up a brave fight. He had to compromise, but I join other hon. Members in congratulating him on his success. I should not like him to think that we regard that victory as one that he took upon himself to achieve without any coercion. There has been considerable debate during the past couple of years on the issues of environment and agriculture.

I wish to remind the House of a few conclusions published during the past couple of years. The House of Lords Select Committee on European Communities in the 1983-84 Session, concluded:

"modern agriculture is incompatible with almost everything else."

The Countryside Commission, in its annual report last year, said:

"the revision of policies of agricultural support so that they favour, rather than thwart, conservation is long overdue."

The Country Landowners Association said last year:

"Agricultural policy is no longer seen as tenable on economic, social, environmental and political grounds."

[Mr. Ron Davies]

The National Farmers Union, in its document "The Way Forward", called upon the agricultural industry and Government

"to face up to the problems of rural areas and the public demands for high standards of conservation in the countryside."

The House of Commons Select Committee, which has considered the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, earlier this year made 18 recommendations, nine of which dealt directly with agricultural policy. It was told by the chairman of Nature Conservancy Council:

"The financial structure of agriculture is hostile to nature conservation",

while the Minister of State at the Department of the Environment referred to agricultural policy as "the engine of destruction."

Those are the pressures that have been exerted on the Minister. I think that we all recognise that what he has brought to the House goes at least some way towards recognising those pressures.

In essence, the problem is recognised widely—it is the destruction of our environment by agriculture. We now have the generation of surpluses through a system of agriculture supported and directed by the common agricultural policy under successive Governments, not only this Government. Both the destruction of the environment and the generation of surpluses have been funded at substantial cost to public funds. Welcome as clause 9 is, the Government's response to the problem is inadequate.

I can understand why the Government want to introduce charges under clause 1. They are motivated by ideological reasons. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that charges levied where the activity is purely commercial are acceptable. However, I accept that argument only if it relates solely to charges on the commercial aspect of farming. But the imposition of charges will affect not only the commercial aspect—it will affect a whole area of public life. It will affect standards of public hygiene and public health, the maintenance of food supplies and, above all, environmental issues. No longer will there be any direct statutory responsibility on the Minister to give advice and guidance on environmental issues. Whatever he said in his opening speech, under the Bill he can impose charges. He is taking upon himself the power to levy a charge for advice on environmental issues, and the price that we are being asked to pay is heavy.

Although I welcome the major change in policy encompassed in clause 9, there are considerable doubts about the scope of the environmentally sensitive areas, their management, their funding, and how they will be selected, and about the dead hand of the Treasury.

Another aspect that causes me some concern is the operation of the Forestry Commission, especially in my area of Mid-Glamorgan and Gwent, where we have seen the destruction of the environment in key and sensitive areas by the use of agricultural subsidies. How on earth can the Minister justify the continued payment of subsidies in environmentally sensitive areas? One scheme may receive public funds for the development of practices that are both at variance with the Minister's stated objective and destructive of the environment, while in the next field, farm or valley, grants will be paid to prohibit or discourage certain agricultural practices. That is a major flaw in the Bill.

It is not a good Bill, and it will go into its Committee stage with reservations. I hope that when it leaves Committee, it will be a better Bill.

9.3 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Today we are debating the Second Reading of a Bill whose purpose, in the long term, is to signify fundamental change in the direction of British agriculture. It has been brought about because agriculture, unlike many other industries, has been far too successful. Politicians, from the Prime Minister downwards, tell the same story when addressing farming audiences — that, if only every industry in Britain had applied new technology and increased its productivity as agriculture has done, Britain's position would be quite different today.

With this unanimous recognition, why the need for a change, which, at a stroke, will increase costs to the industry, a change away from the concept and well-proven benefits to the nation of the famous 1948 Act — a change encouraged by those who carp incessantly, from the feeling of a full belly, about the wilful destruction of the countryside by farmers who, when all is said and done, have only been fulfilling their side of a bargain with successive Governments in producing food for the nation at a price people can afford?

The reason for the change is primarily twofold: first, the over-production of agricultural produce in the European Community, and, secondly, the inability of politicians to react to this situation by reforming the CAP or even applying the principles, originally laid down in the Treaty of Rome, which gave each country the right to a reasonable return for its indigenous crops. Our Mediterranean partners, who have the advantage of giving us the wine and olive oil lakes, have cashed in on the dairy industry at the expense of the British milk producer.

A financial crisis in the Community 18 months ago gave us milk quotas, the repurcussions of which are still being felt throughout the nation, not only by dairy farmers but by creameries which are now closing for good.

The Bill contains a clause to amend the Agricultural Marketing Act 1983 by allowing higher levies to be collected for use in promoting better marketing and research. The latest cliché of "getting added value from your product" is frequently used, but the dairy farmer would like to know how this will be possible with quotas restricting them to 80 per cent. of the British market.

Agriculture welcomes the need for research into the alternative uses of crops, particularly in sugar and cereals. I hope that my right hon. Friend will give the House an assurance that when we find commercial alternatives, they will not be traded with our European partners. British sugar growers are already incensed that a potential market of half a million tonnes of sugar required for the chemical industry is possibly about to be given to the French.

I also share the NFU view that the membership of the Home Grown Cereals Authority and of the Meat and Livestock Commission should be democratic and equally balanced by those who pay the levies. The consequences of taxation without representation are well known.

I welcome the introduction, for the first time, of charges for certain advice and related services from the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, but I predict

that the budgeted income from this service will not reach 25 per cent. of the total, because farmers will not pay for ADAS advice as a second opinion.

Clause 9 is welcomed by all who love our countryside. That applies particularly to the designation of environmentally sensitive areas and, within those areas, the need to encourage farming practices which will conserve those features by means of management agreements. Many believe that what they see in the countryside has been created by God. That is right, but let them remember that the spadework is done by farmers. If they remember that, they will find that all the co-operation that is necessary to maintain it is forthcoming from willing partners.

The major criticism of the Bill is not about what it contains but about what is omitted. There is no mention of how to solve the impending crisis facing cereal growers from over-production. However, what is known is that co-responsibility levies with price restraint will not work because every percentage point reduction in price will be met by a corresponding percentage increase in yield.

I commend to my right hon. Friend the NFU initiative on cereal quotas and acreage set-aside, which, if implemented, would eliminate storage charges for surpluses and release billions of pounds with which to pay farmers more for producing less and also give the community much-needed funds for job creation. We cannot afford not to have a viable alternative when the next financial crisis faces the European Community. The last solution hastily imposed on milk producers, without detailed consultation, is not a road that the British farmer will ever travel again.

Farmers, like sailors, can sail through the stormiest waters so long as they have a chart to follow. But what they are having to do now is sail through those waters not knowing when they will hit the next submerged obstacle.

9.9 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I have nothing in common politically with the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) but it is a pleasure to follow him, partly because, like him, I have a background in the Scottish farming industry. If he had still been farming in Scotland this year, his comparison with life at sea would not have been so far off the mark. We were both educated at the west of Scotland college of agriculture, which is one of the institutions that is hit by the regime of cuts that the Government are imposing.

I am, by nature, a generous man. I always like to start my speeches with the good news. We give our whole hearted welcome to clause 9 and the provision for environmentally sensitive areas. This is a constructive measure, which has been endorsed by agricultural and conservation interests. We wish it well. No doubt, if our queries are not answered tonight, they will be answered in Committee. They include the question about the number of sites and the question of the security of this provision from possible Treasury veto. We shall have much more to say in Committee.

Clause 1 will enable the Minister to charge for advisory services and for statutory services provided by his Department. In the past few months, there has been much coded humbug about industry funding for these services. One of the many press releases which we received from the Department—we are grateful for them—dated 7 November refers to what are cryptically described as

"discussions with the agricultural industry about the scope for raising revenue for services provided to them by Government as a contribution to the planned public expenditure cuts"—

as though the industry were wildly enthusiastic about paying more money into the Treasury! Of course, we all know what is going on. This is part of the contribution by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Government's cuts programme. The nation is suffering from a Government-inflicted wasting disease. Every Department has to make its contribution towards the general misery.

I suppose that we should never be surprised by the loyalty of the National Farmers Union to the Conservative party. The NFU says that it supports the intentions of the Bill and then lists a large number of reservations. That loyalty has been stretched to masochism. The NFU says that it supports the principle of charges. To say that at a time like this must be loyalty beyond the call of duty.

The Minister has limited control over his budget, as he has acknowledged. About two thirds of the total budget is dictated by people from faraway places who know little about this country. I think particularly of people such as Ignaz Kiechle who seem to think that the intervention system and food mountains are a good thing.

We learn from yet another of the Department's press releases — this one on 12 October — that what was described as

"inescapable expenditure under present Community policies"

would be £460 million more than was originally budgeted for 1985-86. That is all going towards those notorious intervention stores and food mountains.

A Minister with that sort of "inescapable expenditure" handicap before he starts obviously has considerable difficulty in earning Brownie points for cutting his overall spending. When this Minister has to make a choice between defending the valuable parts of his Department's spending or currying favour with the Chancellor, he has no hesitation in opting for the Chancellor. The right hon. Gentleman is going ahead with a 5·6 per cent. cut in those parts of his budget that he can control during the coming year.

Spending on intervention and other commitments under the common agricultural policy will be increased by 3·2 per cent. to £1·9 billion this year, but in the coming year the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will cut the remainder of his budget by 5·6 per cent. to £830 million. Much of it will come from a series of mean cuts and adjustments to the advisory, research and development services. An extra £450 million will be spent on the grain mountains, while £16·5 million will come off research and advice and guidance for the industry. The hon. Member for Stratford on Avon (Mr. Howarth) described this as cheese-paring. I agree with him.

The principle of a freely available, state-funded advisory service for agriculture was established in 1944 with all-party support. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Mr. Body) was a Member of Parliament in 1944. If he was, he would have opposed the establishment of this principle, just as he opposes so many other matters.

During the past 40 years, ADAS and the Scottish agricultural colleges have built up a research aid advisory service which is second to none. This point was highlighted in her speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard). This service provides a contact between industry and the research

[Mr. John Home Robertson]

organisations that has helped to make British agriculture into a world leader. All aspects of crop and livestock husbandry have been developed. This process has been too successful. It has improved techniques and output. The production incentives of the common agricultural policy have led to the generation of massive surpluses of food that would have been unimaginable not so very long ago.

Agriculture is now at a turning point. It is facing a crisis and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food does not know what to do about it. He and his hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston think that this, of all times, is the moment drastically to cut the advisory services. The Opposition say that the advisory services should provide a different kind of research and advice to help the industry to come through this difficult time.

During the past year a drastic set of quota restrictions has been imposed without warning on the dairy sector. Large numbers of farmers have had to give up milk production. This raises serious problems both for those who stay in the industry and for those who come out of it. The outgoers need guidance about alternative uses for their land. There is evidence that too many of them are turning to the production of cereals and beef, commodities already in surplus. ADAS could help to resolve this problem. It is attempting to do so, but its efforts are being undermined by uncertainty. Therefore, the work that ought to be done is not being done.

Those who stay in the dairy industry also face a problem. They need advice on how to sustain income and employment while producing less milk. That important and serious point was raised by, among others, my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Dr. Thomas). It is an apt example. It demonstrates the need for a new type of advice for the industry. Instead of maximising production, we should seek ways of sustaining rural employment and protecting the environment while producing fewer crops and less meat. That will be a difficult and disruptive process for the industry. It will require the best advice that is available and a new approach to the agricultural economy.

In conjunction with the Minister's statements about the imposition of charges and a reduction in overall expenditure, clause 1 means that the advisory services will be slashed. Research and development has already taken a hammering. There have been major reductions in the funding of the Agricultural and Food Research Council. The research and development budget of ADAS has already been cut by £4 million, even before publication of the priorities board report. As the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon explained, and as hon. Members know, that involves the closure of three agricultural science service laboratories, one at Shardlow hall in Derby, another at Llanishen, Wales, and the third at Bangor, also in Wales. It also involves the closure of the department of the central veterinary laboratory at Lasswade in Midlothian on 1 April next year.

Research and development cuts, overall, are to be £10 million in 1986-87 and a further £20 million in 1987-88. Clause 1 will lead to a £16·5 million cut. That is a 20 per cent. in the ADAS advisory budget. That cut will be made up as follows: the first element will be £6 million of charges to be levied on statutory work. That work is considered to be so essential that Parliament requires it to be carried out. It will be charged for in future. The second element is a further £5·5 million of cuts, which means at least 380 fewer staff in ADAS and a proportionately greater loss of staff in Scottish agricultural colleges. Finally, there is the Minister's "guesstimate" of £5 million to be raised by charges for the advisory services.

We still do not know whether that sum can possibly be realised. Obviously, the transition will cause a deal of chaos, and it spells massive uncertainty in the agricultural research and advisory services.

The Opposition are always thankful for small mercies. We welcome the Government's action to take brucellosis and tuberculosis testing and certain other things out of the proposed charges net. However, that merely removes the immediate threat. A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) and for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) pointed out that those powers are discretionary. There is nothing to prevent either this Minister of Agriculture or any future Minister of Agriculture extending the scope of the charges to other aspects of ADAS and there is nothing to determine the scale of the charges. The Bill will leave the Minister and successive Ministers absolutely free to impose charges across the board if they so wish.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Does the hon. Gentleman think that farmers should make some contribution for the advice they receive?

Mr. Home Robertson: There may be an argument for such charges. I do not necessarily rule out charges. What worries me is that any Minister from now on, under these powers and without recourse to Parliament, can apply such charges.

Mr. Colin Shepherd *rose*——

Mr. Home Robertson: I do not want to give way. I have already given up some of my time. The Minister is demanding 30 minutes for his speech. However, if the hon. Member has an important point, I shall give way.

Mr. Shepherd: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. This will be the last time that I shall rise during his speech. Will he answer the direct question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord)?

Mr. Home Robertson: My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) made it abundantly clear that it is the Opposition's intention to scrap these charges. I can understand that there might be an intellectual case for imposing charges, but I am personally opposed to charges, and so is the Labour party.

Clause 1 does not cover Scotland, because at present there is no statutory provision requiring free advisory services in Scotland. Nevertheless, the advisory services have always been free in Scotland. Scotland is being used as the guinea pig for the cuts that the Bill will impose on agricultural advisory and research services in England and Wales.

The Government are treating rural Scotland and the rest of rural Britain with characteristic contempt. Hard-hit livestock producers are still waiting for the special aid that the Minister promised after our disastrous summer weather. It looks as if the producers will have to wait until the snow melts before they see any cash from the Government.

Scottish farmers face unprecedented problems, not just because of the bad weather but because of the general uncertainty that is being raised by the changing priorities

for agriculture. Farmers need the best advice that they can obtain at a time like this, but the Government are slashing a massive 41 per cent. from the budget for advisory services in Scotland and imposing £3·4 million in charges for advice.

The Government consultative paper on charges for advisory services in Scotland acknowledges the growing need for sound advice for farmers. Paragraph 3.2 of that document states:

"It is highly likely that the pace of change will increase in the years ahead, flowing from changes in the political and economic context in which agriculture is practised, and from changing perceptions in the community at large about the nature of that practice, the relationship between agriculture and the environment and animal welfare. These changing circumstances and perceptions are bound to have a significant impact on advisory services."

The consultatiye document gives the game away in paragraph 3.4, which states:

"However, the key factor impelling change in the advisory services at the present time is the Government's decision to reduce public expenditure on these services by £3·4 million . . . (a reduction of 41·53 per cent.) as from April 1987."

The cuts have nothing to do with needs or the merits of the case. The key factor behind the package is the need to cut Government expenditure.

I recommend that hon. Members representing English and Welsh constituencies study that consultative document. It gives the proposed range of charges for services in Scotland. No doubt, under this Bill, they will be extended to England and Wales.

There is no doubt that the new charges will reduce the take-up of advisory services. ADAS's consultants persuaded the Government to reduce the target for income from charges from £10 million to £5 million. There must be a risk that fertiliser and pesticide companies as well as feed compounders will offer their own free advisory services. I stress the word "free" because those companies will no doubt get their money back in one way or another. They will offer their own free advisory services, but they will generally include pressure to buy that firm's products. That happened when charges were introduced for soil analyses. The headline in the *Farming News* of 15 November is:

"Feed firm is gearing up."

That refers to BOCM Silcock. The report states:

"National feed compounders are expecting a big upsurge in demand for their advisory services when ADAS starts putting up the price tags. ADAS will soon be charging for services, such as forage analysis, say the compounders. But they will be able to do the job free."

I wonder. The news item continued:

"So it's a fair bet that a growing number of farmers will make use of the feed company's technical sales specialists."

"Sales" is probably the operative word.

Conservation organisations may be correct to fear that that intrusion by commercial interests into advisory services could undermine the new conservation element in the official ADAS advisory system. I am worried that those farmers who will be most deterred by those charges are those who have the greatest need for sound advice. That point was made by my hon. Friends the Members for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch). No doubt big agri-business operators will get their information and research work done for them whenever they want it one way or another.

I fear that small farmers who urgently need sound advice on how to cope with quotas and the changing agricultural scene may try to do without specialist advice because of the charges. They may be driven to ruin by that understandable false economy.

The most disturbing thing that I have read recently on this subject was the report in the *Farming News* of 22 November. It referred to an internal Ministry paper which suggested that those cuts and charges could lead ADAS to be so understaffed that it would not be able to cope with essential work and statutory commitments. That suggests that the system could break down at some point despite the ministerial assurances given in this debate and earlier.

Farmers will be paying for a reduced and unreliable service. That is a matter for grave concern. There is a risk that revenue from charges could be low initially as farmers try to do without the services. How can ADAS survive through the lean time, when the income from charges may be low, and still provide a service in the long term?

The Government are taking a terrible risk by imposing this new regime at such short notice. There is a risk that efficient teams of advisers, economists and scientists could be broken up. It could take years to repair the ensuing damage and destruction. That point was made by several of my hon. Friends but also by the hon. Members for Stratford-on-Avon and for Wantage (Mr. Jackson).

The House will gather that we are opposed to clause 1 and we dislike the policies behind it. We shall vote against clause 1 in Committee and, if we fail, we shall oppose it on Report. However, we do not want to throw the baby out with the bath water. We recognise that clause 9, which we wholeheartedly support, may be a delicate infant. That is why we shall not divide the House on Second Reading and we shall not support the alliance amendment which would kill the environmentally sensitive area initiative. It was pure gimmickry for the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) to commit the serried ranks of two alliance Members present for his speech to vote against Second Reading. I am interested to see how the alliance will explain this to the conservation lobby. They may even have difficulty explaining it to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

The charges in clause 1 are discretionary. We support the principle of free advice and guidance for agriculture. Happily, even with clause 1 on the statute book, my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) will be able to fulfil the undertaking that he gave at the beginning of the debate to get rid of the charges as part of a review of the structure of ADAS as soon as he takes over as Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That will be a happy day for agriculture.

9.32 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): I welcome the generous terms in which the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) welcomed clause 9. The hon. Gentleman raised several points which I hope to deal with as I reach the relevant point in the Bill. *[Laughter.]* The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has not been present very often today, so perhaps he should wait until he has something to laugh at.

The amendment is rather odd. It was proposed by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who left soon afterwards and returned for the speech of his right hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey)—the other bit of the alliance—to

[Mr. Gummer]

make sure that he said the same things. He left the House again and came back only then he thought that the wind-up would begin. That suggests that the amendment is a gimmick and has nothing to do with agricultural policy. The hon. Member has not even been here to hear what the agricultural policy is. He has not been here long enough to understand that there is a split on agricultural policy in the Liberal party.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) told us that Liberal party policy was to take severe powers to control buildings and land used for farming in a tough way. It would even cover hedgerows. I would be interested to see the planning committee of the Suffolk Coastal district council going on its hedgerow look if we ever have an alliance Government. The hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor put us out of our misery by saying that that was not the Liberal party policy that he supported. I should have liked the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland to tell us whether there was a third policy—held by the SDP—within the alliance. Unfortunately, there was no such opportunity, because the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland was not present.

Another serious point is that, in the early part of the speech of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor, he referred to "we". It must have been the royal "we", because no other hon. Member from his party or from the SDP was present in the Chamber.

The amendment is a got-up job. It is a disgrace to produce the amendment merely for the purpose of saying, "Just in case anyone has forgotten us, we are still here. We have come in with an amendment so that we can have a little vote. We want to show that the alliance"—I understand that following the most recent speech by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor, it is to be known as the fixed link—"is still here." I hope that the House will not pay too much attention to what the alliance has said. It could have been said in Committee. The only reason why it was not is that alliance Members never go to Committees—unless the broadcasting light is on, when they are very quick to get to their feet. They are here to get a bit of publicity. For that reason, we can leave the alliance Members and such arguments as they put forward.

I come to the serious opposition to the Bill. I shall try to help the hon. Member for East Lothian, who adopted a reasonable position. He disagrees with a number of provisions in the Bill and I shall deal with them. However, it was a bit hard for the hon. Gentleman to say that Government policy was dictated by people from faraway places. I suppose that the hon. Gentleman meant 22 miles across the channel. I seem to remember that the Labour Government's policy was dictated by the IMF, which came from a long way away.

Given the proposals made by the hon. Gentleman, we must ask him to look at the Bill again. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), who is my parliamentary neighbour and whose constituents use much of my constituency for their leisure pursuits, said that the Bill had two parts—clause 9 and clause 1. He left out the middle bit. The hon. Member for East Lothian did the same. Having dealt with clause 9, he referred to the other objective and left out the centre part of the Bill. That shows that Labour Members have not thought out the fundamental problem facing British agriculture.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) said clearly, we have moved from a position in which agriculture was dominated by the need to avoid scarcity to a situation where we have politically to manage plenty. That is a major change which we cannot ignore.

I do not wish to swap quotations with my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), but we are being given food in

"good measure, pressed down . . . and running over."

That is why we must seek a different policy from that followed while scarcity was our main problem.

In those circumstances, marketing is at least one of the components with which we ought to be concerned. We ought to try to sell the products that we produce. We cannot pretend that the Home Grown Cereals Authority has nothing to do with dealing with the problem or refuse to mention the Meat and Livestock Commission.

There was hardly a mention of Food from Britain. There was one—from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, who said that this year the French are spending £100 million on their equivalent organisation. I have checked, because I thought that the hon. Gentleman was wrong. The French are spending 300 million francs, which, even, at only 10 francs to the pound, means that the hon. Gentleman was as inaccurate about that as he was about everything else in his speech.

The hon. Member for East Lothian rightly said that the problems of agriculture ought to be met, at least in part, by the marketing of products through the Food from Britain. He said that we are not spending enough. Perhaps we are not, but we are spending very much more than anything that the previous Labour Government spent. While the French were increasing their expenditure year by year, did we have a single peep about Food from Britain from the Labour party? All we had from it were attacks on those producing the food.

When reference was made to the comment of the Opposition Front Bench spokesman on the Environment, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), there was a frisson on the Opposition Front Bench. Its occupants became extremely worried and the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) rose quickly, saying, "It wasn't me. Honestly, it wasn't me." He did so because his hon. Friend had said something that no self-respecting Opposition spokesman would want to have fathered on him. He said that agriculture is one of the industries that is having one of the most malign effects on the environment. I am not surprised that the Opposition are not voting against the Bill tonight. They have a long way to go to make it up with the agricultural community.

Mr. John: Perhaps we could agree to pair my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), the Opposition spokesman on the environment with the Minister of State, Department of the Environment, who referred to agriculture as the engine of destruction.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Mr. Gummer: I shall be happy to answer. If my hon. Friend the Minister of State said that, he was wrong. I invite the hon. Member for Pontypridd to say that the hon. Member for Copeland was wrong. I shall happily give way. It seems that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to, and I know why. It is because the statement of the Opposition's environment spokesman reflects the central

attitude of the Labour party to agriculture, and that cannot be defended by using a stray comment that has been taken out of context.

Mr. Torney: Can we get away from this rhetoric? We shall have great fun in Committee if this rhetoric continues. Will the right hon. Gentleman get down to the nitty-gritty and tell us what is meant by "reasonable charges"? What "reasonable charges" mean to his right hon. Friend the Minister, who is a rich man, may be quite different from what "reasonable charges" mean to me, a poor man.

Mr. Gummer: If the hon. Gentleman can contain himself for a moment and listen to my answer, I am sure that he will be happy. However, the serious opposition to this Bill, muted though it may have been, on the part of the official Opposition comes from fear of the changes that are bound to come. It is the fear of those who have to hold on to the present lest anything different should be worse. It is not surprising——

Mr. Torney: That is gobbledegook.

Mr. Gummer: I will put it more simply for the hon. Gentleman. The argument which the Opposition Front Bench has tried to advance is that farmers, if deprived of an entirely free service, will go to those whose services are bound to be improper and unsuitable. That shows a contempt for the farming industry and it is a curious view. Those who attack the French farming industry—the bête noire of those who feel that anybody beyond these shores somehow has two heads and fuzzy hair—fail to notice that nearly 50 per cent. of all advice given to the farmers of France is paid for by the farmers.

An important argument has been advanced on competition. It has been said that the Bill will make our stance less competitive. I venture to suggest that a more direct connection between research and the industry would be likely to make us more competitive, especially in a Community in which——

Mr. Hardy *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I must continue, because the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Torney) is longing to hear my reply to his intervention.

The hon. Member for East Lothian, who replied for the Opposition, appeared to be making policy on the hoof. He was asked about the charges. The hon. Gentleman was asked whether he thought that all charges were unacceptable, and he replied, "There may be an argument for them." When he had had the opportunity to think about that, he added, "There may be an intellectual argument for them." I do not know what other kind of argument there could be for them. Was the hon. Gentleman saying that there may be an intellectual argument for charges but that there is no practical argument for them? Alternatively, was he saying that the Labour party does not accept intellectual arguments of that sort but only arguments which it thinks will result in it gaining the odd vote?

The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that he did not make a case. In the end, he did not dare talk about the ADAS charges. Instead, he told us that the Labour party would withdraw ADAS. He did not say that a Labour Government would ask for some payments to be made to support ADAS or that they would continue to provide most of the funding. That was not his line. He told us that a Labour Government would withdraw ADAS, and no doubt the research facilities would go with it.

The hon. Gentleman realised then that he had not said the right thing, and so he added that farmers, who represent a commercial enterprise, should not pay something towards the commercial advice that they receive. It is not meant that everything should be free and we are not saying that the full cost of research should be borne by farmers. We are merely saying that is reasonable that some part of the research costs should be paid by farmers.

The hon. Member for Pontypridd, who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, talked about ADAS and his policy for the future. Evidently he would withdraw the charges that we propose and initiate a major restructuring of ADAS. He made much of the concern about ADAS and expressed worry about its morale. How would anyone feel about a major restructuring that is initiated by a party which believes that farmers are a malign influence in the countryside? If I were to be worried, I would be worried about the hon. Gentleman and not about anyone on the Conservative Benches.

Mr. Hind: Will my right hon. Friend take on board many of the comments that have been made about small farmers? Will he note the criticism that has been expressed that many of these farmers, because of the expense of seeking the advice of ADAS, will be driven to taking advice where it is free? Will he respond to the problem by introducing a scale of charges that will ensure that the small farmer will pay far less on an acreage basis than those with much larger farms?

Mr. Torney: The hon. Gentleman is taking the Minister seriously.

Mr. Gummer: I am glad that my hon. Friend is, because I take his intervention seriously. My hon. Friend is right to observe that it is important that we ensure that the scale of charges meets the market. That is what it will be there to do. I understand the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) about "reasonable charges". The House will be aware that "reasonable" is used in the Agriculture Act 1947. It has caused no problems since then, so I doubt whether it will in future. Extra protection is provided by "reasonable" because the charges will have to operate in the market place. To that extent, reasonableness has a real meaning, which will be reflected in the market place.

I do not want to miss the point made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland about how sad he was at the timing of the changes. I hope that the House will remember that at the beginning of his speech he said that it was all a matter of timing. He was then asked whether he would have minded the changes last year when the farmers had a good year. He said that he would not have wanted the changes last year, nor does he want them next year. I wonder when the time will be right. Is he opposed to the changes altogether for the reason that I suspect, that he is hoping to pick up the odd vote or two, and this seems to be a convenient moment to do so?

The hon. Member for East Lothian made generous comments about clause 9. He said that it met a great need. I hope that he will agree that it was grossly unfair of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, first, not to give credit to my right hon. Friend the Minister for having

[Mr. Gummer]

put the Bill forward, having won over the European Community, getting a directive from it and bringing it to the House. Secondly—*[Interruption.]* That is the point. It is a regulation and the hon. Gentleman was wholly wrong when he said that the change would have to happen anyway. It can happen only if it is brought before the House because we have to pay for it. The hon. Gentleman did less than justice to my right hon. Friend in making that point.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised a point of great importance. I have gone to some trouble, as I promised I would, to answer that question. Such a phrase has been used not only in previous Bills presented by the Government but in the Agriculture Act 1970, which was put forward by the Labour Government. I shall read the phrase:

"The appropriate authority may with the approval of the Treasury by scheme provide for the making, subject to such exceptions or restrictions as may be provided for by the scheme, of grants of amounts determined in such manner . . . as may be provided . . ."

The hon. Gentleman then made the point about money. I am sure that he would not like to mislead the House. The point is an important one in favour of the scheme, not against it. We are saying that the Treasury gives its permission at the point at which the decision is made to designate an area for that purpose. The management discussions can then go on aware of the fact that the money is there to pay for it. If it were not in that form, one might declare the area to be environmentally sensitive and go through all the negotiations and discussions and then the Treasury might say that the money is not available. It is there to make it clear.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that we all know that the Treasury takes an active part in the spending of money in this country. We know that that happened under the previous Government as under this Government, except that under the previous Labour Government the IMF took a more active role. The reality is that it would not be unfair to say, as has been said in previous agriculture Acts, that once the Treasury gives its permission, the scheme could go ahead.

Mr. Dalyell: I am not clear about who in the Treasury makes the decision. Is the Treasury equipped to go into that form of agricultural value judgment?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman knows that in all such circumstances when money is to be spent, the Ministers make the case for the money. The Treasury is therefore able to judge that against other priorities and make a judgment about priorities within the amount of money available. It would be an odd Treasury that did not do that.

Clause 9 is a most important part of the proposals. It is important because there have been proper complaints and real fears that modern methods of agriculture in certain circumstances are environmentally harmful. It is therefore necessary to ensure that farmers can have a reasonable income from their land and at the same time farm in a way that is environmentally acceptable. That seems to be accepted on both sides. The matter has been given real thought for the first time in the House.

It is true that £6 million will be available for that purpose in the initial stage. It is absolutely true, too, that we have said that we want to go slowly to start with to make sure that we meet the very points that hon. Members on both sides of the House have pressed, but it is a complicated matter: for example, not least the relationship between landlord and tenant—who will be able to carry out the bargain that is made—not least the problems of ensuring that we have a scheme that works within the European context, and not least ensuring that we do not have the problems that we had with the Wildlife and Countryside Act, when there was criticism of the way in which it operated and the way in which some farmers benefited from it.

All those things argue caution. All those things argue that we should seek to take a small number of sites to start with. It was unfair of the hon. Member for Pontypridd to talk about the number of sites that have been proposed. He mentioned 45 sites, but he also said that 12 sites were the most important and the ones that we should deal with first. We have talked about five or six sites. That is a reasonable number to start with and to check. It is from those sites that we shall gain the experience.

The reality is that the Government have proposed this major change for the first time and provided the money for it. We should not have carping nonsense from the Opposition, who complain only that there is not enough money. There may not be as much as they would like or as many sites as they would like, but there are infinitely more sites and more money than anything that the Labour Government managed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir. H. Monro), whose long-standing support for conservation we all recognise, raised several conservation issues which will have to come up in Committee. However, I hope that he will allow me to underline the point that he made, which was that this is not the first measure but one of a series of measures that have come from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food over the past two or three years. I say this in reply to some of the comments by the hon. Member for Ipswich, who is not here. This year's environment survey made it clear that in one year 7 million trees have been planted and 2,000 new ponds have been created for the countryside. For the first time for a long time we are beginning to see a major improvement in the environment through working with the farmers instead of accusing them of being a malign influence on the countryside.

When we come to the point about ADAS and research, which many Opposition Members made, I suggest two things. If one wants an agriculture that can sell the products that it produces, one must bring it much closer to the market than it has been heretofore. The industry has been too production-oriented — not marketing-oriented enough. The Government are determined to take the unpopular measures—*[Interruption.]* Of course people do not want to pay for that which previously they have had for free, but the Government are prepared to ask for that payment because only by making it will there be a closer relationship, particularly with the research that will be carried out.

When Opposition Members say that all research that is paid for is somehow inferior, I can tell them that the vast majority of the research will still be funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food or other Government organisations. In the end, the taxpayer will still pay for the overwhelming majority. The remaining small part will enable the industry to have direct influence on and control over what the research shall be.

The Bill is part and parcel of the major lead that the Government are giving to agriculture for the changed circumstances of the politics of plenty. It is not just clause 9 but the whole Bill, and it is with great pleasure that Conservative Members support it.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 23, Noes 179.

Division No. 10] **[10 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Paddy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Freud, Clement
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Livsey, Richard
Maclennan, Robert
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Wainwright, R.
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Alton and
Mr. James Wallace.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Body, Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(SW N'folk)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert *(W Herts)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Luce, Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — *[Mr. Maude.]*

AGRICULTURE BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Agriculture Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament—

(1) of any expenses incurred by any Minister by virtue of that Act; and

(2) of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act. — *[Mr. Maude.]*

AGRICULTURE BILL [WAYS AND MEANS]

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Agriculture Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the charging of fees under the seeds regulations made under section 16 of the Plant Varieties and Seeds Act 1964; and

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums falling to be paid into that Fund in pursuance of the Act resulting from that Bill.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Education

10.12 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I beg to move,

That the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1985 (S.I., 1985, No. 1126) dated 22nd July 1985, a copy of which was laid before this House on 26th July, in the last Session of Parliament, be revoked.

I want, first, to comment on the procedural farce behind the regulations. Twelve months ago the Secretary of State announced grant proposals for 1985-86. As a result of that, there was considerable outrage among Tory rank and file members, which caused so much upset that there was a lynch-gang of Tory Members of Parliament more or less out for the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State changed his mind almost overnight and announced to the House major new proposals on student grants and said that there would be a major review of student finance. In fact, the proposals did not help those students on the basic grant. Perhaps it was not even designed to help students. But what it did do was to ease the Government's problems with those parents who had incomes in the region of £30,000, and it appeared to buy off the Tory activitists and those hon. Members who were so incensed last year.

We heard nothing more about grants from the Government until it was announced in the spring that the Green Paper on higher education was to be delayed for a few months while a section on student grants was included. Eventually the Green Paper came out and we were told that the section on student grants had had to be left out and would come along in the autumn.

Meanwhile, in June, local authorities were told the details of the grant regulations so that they could calculate the student grants for September. It was only on 26 July that the Government laid the regulations before the House of Commons, the last day before the recess, thus ensuring that there could not possibly be any debate on student grants before we were well into the autumn term.

Instead of acting quickly to encourage debate in the House, the Government have used every device possible to delay opportunities for debate. The 40 days allowed have elapsed and we have had to table a motion to enable us to debate the matter. So concerned were the Government to avoid discussing student grants that, 14 days ago, in a written reply, the Government announced that they had abandoned their review of student grants. They did not even have the courage to come to the House to make a statement. All those who were concerned about student grants inside and outside the House were prevented from discovering the real reason why the Government had abandoned the opportunity for a major review.

Tonight's debate comes 12 months after the proposals were announced, two months after the money began to be paid out under the regulations, at a time when we cannot effect the regulations; and when a vote will have little practical effect. Perhaps Government Members are not interested in student grants. If they are, they will remain in the Chamber whether or not a vote takes place. We are too late to influence this year's regulations.

The Government must organise the regulations better next year, so that we have the proposals well before the summer recess. We should be given the details at the same time as they are given to local authorities. The Government should make a clear statement now about student grants next year. We can make a rough calculation from the autumn statement, but students will be lucky to receive their 2 or 3 per cent. increase in grant. The Government should come clean and tell us by how much they intend to put up the grant next year.

Perhaps the increase will be so derisory that the Government want to wait until students have finished the term and are into the Christmas break. Perhaps after last year's experience they want to ensure that the House of Commons is not sitting on that hon. Members cannot get at them if their proposals are as unpopular as they were last year. Perhaps the Government want to ensure that at least the House is into the last week before the recess and is likely to give Ministers an easier ride. I urge the Minister to come clean tonight and to tell us what the student grant increase will be for next year. If he cannot tell us tonight, he must promise a statement within the next 10 days.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) on his recent appointment. I wish him well. *[Interruption.]* It would be wrong to blame him, because he was not responsible. It is fair to blame his predecessor and the Government.

The Minister's first task should be to talk to students about their grants. He will talk to the National Union of Students, but he should talk to individual students and lecturers in higher education. He should try to sit in on meetings between students and welfare officers in the higher education institutions and at meetings between students and student union welfare officers.

Such discussions will reveal hardships. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate students' problems and discover how difficult it is for many students who are managing their own finances for the first time. They do not always spend their money wisely. Not all hon. Members spend their money wisely. They make mistakes. If a student makes a mistake, there is no room within the grant to recover. A student can fail throughout three years to recover, and so will not benefit from higher education.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): We are talking mainly about young people who are over 18 years of age, to whom we have probably mistakenly given the vote. They do not need our guidance, because they can now vote at general elections. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that we should give patronising guidance to such people because they cannot manage their own financial affairs? How can they be expected to guide this country's destiny when they cannot even manage their financial affairs at university?

Mr. Bennett: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should question whether 18-year-olds should have the vote. I should have thought that he would accept such a fundamental principle. It is unfortunate that many of them should find it difficult to manage their incomes for the first time. Difficulties usually arise because many students do not receive the full grant. Some of the money has to be provided by their parents. As the hon. Gentleman and many of his colleagues are only too well aware, many of them do not receive that money and have to manage on less than the full grant. No doubt the hon. Gentleman used to manage on his grant, but it was probably worth considerably more than it is today. It is now at almost its lowest value since its introduction in 1962.

The Minister should listen to what the students have to say. He would then discover that many students genuinely

have to make a choice between buying books at the beginning of term and going short of meals towards the end of term. Conservative Members should talk to students, because they would then discover that many of them do not attend lectures towards the end of term because they have run out of the cash with which to pay their travel fares. They would also discover that an increasing number of students are extremely worried about making ends meet. Some of them have their whole futures destroyed as a result of that worry. The Minister should be concerned about that.

Indeed, if the Minister goes round student campuses he will find that more and more students opt out of activities because of a lack of funds. They may obtain good degrees, but they will not benefit from the wider experience that could be gained from participating in such activities. Those activities would give them the skills and opportunities that would in turn enable them to obtain far more out of the higher education system. The hon. Gentleman might find himself forcefully reminded that the student grant is now worth 83 per cent. of its value in 1962 in relation to the retail price index. Indeed, it is worth only 52 per cent. when compared with average earnings. If a comparison is drawn between student grants, social security and unemployment benefit, student grants fare even worse. Students will firmly remind the Government that their grants are now 17 per cent. below the level of 1979.

If, as the Government hint in their autumn statement, students obtain only 2 or 3 per cent. in 1986, the situation will become even worse. The Minister should be well aware that the retail prices index does not fully reflect student costs. For example, book inflation is almost double the general level of inflation. If the Minister consults the students, he will hear many of them complain bitterly about the new travel grant arrangements and their effect on student activities. He will also hear them voice their concern about the way in which the Oxford DHSS tried to claim in the summer that covenanted income should be included in the calculation for entitlement to benefit——

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): May I ask the hon. Gentleman to help me on that point? My understanding is that a student with a full grant from the education authority can earn up to his tax-free allowance in his vacation without having to pay tax. However, if he has a covenant from his parents or grandparents up to the tax-free allowance, he can earn nothing without paying tax. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that if a student's parents, having paid tax, give him a donation equal to the tax-free allowance, he is allowed to earn a sum equivalent to the tax-free allowance? That does not make sense. Can the hon. Gentleman help me to understand that point?

Mr. Bennett: I do not intend to be diverted into that area. It is a matter that the hon. Gentleman should put to the Minister. He should be pressing him not to abandon the general grant review, and to ensure that the question of covenanted income and the way in which a student is affected by income tax rules are considered within that general review. The hon. Gentleman should be pressing the Government, not me, on that matter.

The Government should make it clear that they do not expect students to face again the experience that they had in Oxford about covenanted income. It is unfortunate that those advising students have had to persuade them to revise the covenant forms to take that into account.

I hope that the Minister appreciates the grave concern of students about the impact of the Fowler review, as their life would be impossible if they could not claim supplementary and housing benefits in the long vacation. If he talks to them, they will tell him that loans are being introduced by the back door. A large number of students now have overdrafts, their credit card limits are overdrawn and they are increasingly finding themselves permanently in debt.

The Minister's first task is to listen to the complaints of students. He should understand their difficulties in obtaining parental contributions and recognise that increasing numbers of them do not actually receive that contribution.

I ask the Minister to talk to the mature students, many of whom I spoke to recently at their conference. They will tell him that the regulations for mature students have not been adapted to present-day circumstances, and especially to take into account the large number of people unemployed and the long periods for which they are out of work. The earnings requirement for a full mature grant is that the applicant must have been in work for three years. It is demoralising for someone who has been out of work for a long time, who then becomes a mature student, to find that not only is he starting from a low income, but is being penalised for having been out of work.

The Minister must be aware of the questions about allowances for dependants of mature students, especially the way in which illegitimate children are treated differently from legitimate children. That problem should have been sorted out when drawing up the regulations.

I am sure that the Minister will listen to the vice chancellors, the directors of the polytechnics and the principals of colleges. They will tell him firmly that they are alarmed by and concerned about the fact that student support is no longer adequate. If the Minister really delves into the matter, he will recognise that there is an acute crisis—something to which the Government have failed to address themselves.

After the Secretary of State's fiasco on student grants last year, he announced a major review, and people felt that at least the Government would listen to the arguments. Many of us were concerned that the Government would use the review to introduce loans, but thought that at least it would give everybody an opportunity to talk about grants and to press for improvements. Most of those who examined the problem had no difficulty in coming up with solutions and a long list of problems.

Why have the Government abandoned their review? The Minister will have thrown at him many times the contents of the Prime Minister's letter of 16 August 1978, in which she talked about what a Conservative Government would do about student grants. Six years later, we still do not know whether any of the promises in that letter will be kept, for we do not know whether the Government have conducted a major review of student grants.

The Minister's predecessor claimed that the promise had been kept and that the Government reviewed grants in 1981. The problem is that they did not publish anything as a result of that review. It now appears that, while it is claimed that the Government were reviewing grants for 12 months, there are no published results of that review.

[Mr. Bennett]

There are, therefore, two possibilities. Either the Government have not carried out the review, or they have and the results are so embarrassing to them—because they have discovered the total inadequacy of student grants—that they are not prepared to publish them. They should have the courage to make public all the information that they received in the last 12 months and explain why they decided not to complete their review in a public form.

If the Government have abandoned the review, they should at least consider the whole question of mature students. In their Green Paper on higher education, the Government pointed out that, with falling numbers of 18-year-olds in the coming 10 years, they believed firmly that there should be more mature students. All who commented on the Green Paper, and those who gave evidence prior to it, made it clear that, in their view, even more mature students should be attracted in.

The present regulations, particularly as they affect mature students, discourage many people from going into higher education. There is a strong case for conducting an independent inquiry into the problems of mature students and their grants, and into the whole issue of whether we can design a grants system for mature students that encourages many more of them to come forward.

The Minister is likely to reply by saying, in effect, "It is all very well for the Opposition to criticise the Government for not spending more on grants. What would they do?" The Labour party has carried out a major review of grants and the report of that study, chaired by Lord Glenamara, will be published next week. We give a clear priority to support for 16 to 19-year olds, to ensure that they stay on in education and go into higher education. We see no reason why the grant cannot be restored to the 1979 level. We say that we need better grants for mature students on full-time and part-time courses and that we must begin to address the problem that many students do not receive the parental contributions that they should get.

Mr. Forth *rose*——

Mr. Bennett: No, I shall not give way again to the hon. Gentleman. Only an hour and a half is available to debate this instrument and hon. Members could legitimately complain if Front Benchers take up too much time.

My hon. Friends and I believe that a demand exists for the fair treatment of students. Indeed, if the Government spent as much of the gross domestic product on education as was spent in 1979, about £2·2 billion extra would be available for education, and that would more than meet the proposals on student grants. How much will students receive in grant settlement for 1986? Will there be an opportunity for the House to discuss the regulations in detail, at a time when the House can influence them, rather than their being laid before us after local authorities have started implementing them and students have received the money?

Will the Government, if they will not reach their own conclusions on the review of student grants, at least publish the evidence and information that they receive? Will they consider holding an independent inquiry into the position of mature students? Will the Under-Secretary of State ensure that, in the next 12 months, Parliament is kept much better informed about what is happening with student grants and that the Government do not hide behind written answers on important issues such as student grants?

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): I thank the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) for his kind congratulations and the hyper-sensitive way in which he delivered them.

I am sure that all hon. Members are grateful for this opportunity to debate the subject of student support. It is an important area of higher education policy, and one that has provoked much discussion—perhaps even a little turbulence—in the past year. The debate provides an opportunity for the Government to explain the changes to the regulations that have been made this year and to give an indication of our general approach to the issue of student support.

I shall deal with the second issue first. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 12 November, the Government do not now intend to publish a consultative paper on student support. The reason for this is that the possibility of replacing maintenance grants wholly or partly with loans has been ruled out for the present. Taken together with the present economic situation, the implication of that is that we cannot contemplate any changes of the scale warranted by a consultative paper since any major improvements would need to be balanced by savings which would be both major and unpopular. I would note, with no unkind intent, in this connection that the Labour party appears to be having difficulty in agreeing the main proposals for its higher education charter and that, despite what one has heard, its proposals pay scant attention to the need to keep public spending within bounds.

Although the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish has promised us some figures next week, let me anticipate them by referring to what I am sure he would agree is a sound source—*The Times Higher Education Supplement*—which gives a provisional costing of the hon. Gentleman's promises at about £1 billion on top of present expenditure. I should like to add an innocent inquiry. Is that the same £1 billion that the shadow Chancellor—the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—has agreed to pour down empty mines and to give to other needy people, such as old-age pensioners? In other words, from where would £1 billion come?

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, between 1979 and now, the Government have reduced the proportion of GDP — [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] I am answering the question in my way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] How do hon. Members answer questions, except in their own way? Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, between 1979 and now, the proportion of GDP spent on education has been substantially reduced? This means that there is £2·2 billion less to spend on education. If we simply put that back, we would have answered the two questions that the hon. Gentleman posed.

Mr. Walden: The hon. Gentleman, in his anxiety to evade my question, has posed another question, the economic premises of which are extremely doubtful. National economic factors also underlie this year's grant

rate changes. I should like to make two points, neither of which is original. Both, however, are fundamental. First, the Government have a continuing commitment to control public spending and to pursue improved value for money in all areas. Second, our awards system is very generous compared with most other western countries. Few other countries provide mandatory grant support at the level and for such a wide range of students as here. I should like to stress that this is all the more remarkable when one considers that many countries—for example, Germany—have a much higher gross national product than we do. There are now some 450,000 students who are in receipt of full value awards in Great Britain and public expenditure on their maintenance alone is expected to total some £530 million in the current year. That leaves out of account the much larger subsidy still which is given through the provision of free tuition, of which the aggregate cost is in excess of £1,500 million a year. The Government do not grudge this. We are investing in one of the best possible places, the brain power of the future. But what can be afforded must be measured against other pressing priorities.

Those are the basic reasons for the changes in grant rates. As we have heard, rates have in general been increased by 3 per cent. That adjustment reflects what the Government believe to be a fair balance between the need to meet students' costs and the total expenditure which taxpayers and ratepayers can reasonably be expected to provide. It is worth noting that the overall direct contribution of students and their families towards a student's higher education is, on average, only some 10 per cent. of the total expenditure on maintenance and tuition costs. The other 90 per cent. is met by individual taxpayers, most of whom are unlikely to enjoy a higher education themselves or the higher salaries usually commanded by graduates. Whether or not one thinks that the cost of higher education is now fairly distributed between the taxpayer and the student beneficiary—and there are many who consider that the taxpayers' contribution is disproportionately high—it is right that students should share some of the burden which many have to shoulder in continuing to hold down public expenditure and thus help to regenerate our economy, to the ultimate benefit of everyone, student or not.

It has been claimed by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish — if not here, in other forums — that the measures we have taken on student awards threaten our higher education system more generally. In particular, the charge has been levelled that we seek to control the numbers of students entering higher education through attacks on the grant system. That is simply and demonstrably not so.

The number of full value award holders has risen steadily and is now higher than ever before. This year there are estimated to be 457,000 compared with 369,000 in 1978-79 and a mere 98,000, let us not forget, in 1962-63 when the awards system was set up. This reflects the fact that there are of course more young people in the relevant age groups. I would, however, point out that the age participation index is at a historically high level and is forecast to rise throughout the next decade. For 1984-85 it was 13·7 per cent. compared with 12·4 per cent. in 1978-79.

It has to be recognised that the resources available for student support must be finite. It is vital that there should be careful and sympathetic management of the resources available and that the burden of this sustained expansion in higher education should be fairly shared between those who stand to benefit most directly—students and their families—and the rest of the population. This is what we have aimed to achieve with this year's grant settlement.

The travel element incorporated in the grant has been increased by 5 per cent. which is rather more than the increase in the main rates of grant. Hon. Members will recall that the new arrangements introduced last year for meeting students' travel costs replaced the previous reimbursement system by the inclusion in the grant of a flat rate element for travel expenses. My right hon. Friend is satisfied that the new arrangements, which are administratively much simpler than those they replaced, are generally working well.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): May I impress upon my hon. Friend that, whatever might be the case in the country as a whole, those arrangements are not working well for those few students who come from the Isles of Scilly? They have to travel a stretch of water before they even reach a railway or bus station. Will he impress on his colleagues in the Department the need to reconsider the injustice caused to those students? Although few in number it is, nevertheless, an injustice.

Mr. Walden: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that instance. Other similar instances have been brought to our attention. The Government would like to give the new arrangement time to prove itself and time for a new generation of students to move in under the present system to see how it affects their pattern of behaviour—for example, how close to the university they choose to live. I recognise that that would seem less applicable in the case mentioned by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Why are we continuing with two separate sets of regulations—one for Scottish students and one for English students who may be at the same university? They face the same problems and yet there are different arrangements for travel grants.

Mr. Walden: It is generally acknowledged that Scotland is the same country but rather different territory. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's questions is therefore obvious. It is clear that there is a greater proportion of home students in Scotland and the distances that they have to travel are much wider.

I now come to the subject of parental contributions. That has been a matter of striking a balance. The parental contribution scale has been indexed in line with increases in earnings. As a result about the same number of parents will be assessed for a contribution this year as last. The Government are determined to protect the position of students from less well-off families. That is why the lower part of the scale has been retained at its previous rate, which will help families earning less than around average income.

Mr. Steen: I am aware that my hon. Friend is new in the Department. I wonder whether he will consider that there seems to be discrimination in favour of those students who receive state money. A student receiving state money can earn up to £2,205 without paying any tax. If a parent gives a student a covenant equivalent to £2,205 the student has to pay tax on every penny that he earns above that figure. Even though his parents may receive £700 back he cannot earn £2,205 to look after himself without paying

[Mr. Steen]

tax. That acts in favour of the state that gives the grant and not in favour of private enterprise and the individual. Will he consider that matter?

Mr. Walden: I wonder whether my hon. Friend will mind if I answer that question in two parts. First, I prefer, for reasons that he will understand, not to comment on covenants and income tax as that is more properly for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. My hon. Friend mentioned private enterprise and I shall later touch upon a new measure of relief that is planned under the order to give a little more inducement to students to earn money during term. I am grateful to him for drawing that complexity to my attention and I shall study it.

Many families with residual incomes of about £12,000 or less will pay less under the regulations. I should like to stress that point. We have, however, been obliged to steepen the slope of the contribution scale for families with above average income, thereby increasing their parental contribution in real terms. Our general aim in this respect is to introduce a progressive and, therefore, fairer contribution scale.

Hon. Members will recall that the Government announced last year that parents at the upper end of the scale would be assessed to contribute towards designated tuition fees. However, following the deep concern expressed in many quarters that this would mean too sharp an increase in parental contributions, we decided to withdraw the proposal. There are no plans to reintroduce it.

The Government have also decided to abolish the minimum maintenance award of £205. I know that the decision has been a source of concern on both sides of the House. The reason for it is that we concluded that it would not be equitable to insulate top income families from increased contributions when higher contributions than hitherto would be required from parents with rather lower incomes. So this measure, too, should be seen as part of our general aim to introduce a more progressive system. But it is a balanced system, which tries to avoid extremes. That is why relatively well-off families, although they may be asked to pay for the whole of a student's maintenance needs, will have a limit on their overall contribution of £4,000 if they have more than one award holder.

As my right hon. Friend announced last November, without these changes the cost of student awards would continue to spiral; with them, the country will be better placed not only to meet the cost of awards for an increasing number of students, but to contribute towards increased provision for science and technology in the universities and research councils.

I turn to the other changes in the regulations. Few are contentious and, indeed, I believe that many of them have been generally welcomed.

We have aimed, first, to help certain refugees and other students whose parents might normally be assessed for parental contributions. It has been brought to our attention that such parents could face difficulties in their home countries if they were contacted for assessment purposes, and that it can be extremely difficult for money to be sent from certain countries to the United Kingdom. The regulations have therefore been amended to allow local education authorities to waive the assessment of a parental contribution where they are satisfied that seeking it might jeopardise a student's parents or where it would not be reasonably practicable for the parents to send an assessed contribution to this country.

Secondly, we have widened the definition of independent status to include periods spent on the Manpower Services Commission's youth training scheme and periods spent in receipt of severe disability allowance. The regulations have been amended so that time spent in either of these ways will henceforth be counted for the purpose of establishing a student as independent of his parents and hence not liable to assessment for a parental contribution.

Third—here I come to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen)—the regulations have been amended so that students' term-time earnings will have no effect on their grant. Under the previous regulations, any term-time earnings in excess of £400 resulted in a pound-for-pound reduction in grant. The amendment is consistent with this Government's stated aim of encouraging greater self-support by students.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): If a rich and prosperous industrialist went to university, would his earnings be free of tax during term time?

Mr. Walden: It seems unlikely that that situation would arise. Therefore, it seems unnecessary to comment on that point.

Finally, the regulations have been amended to bring the assessment of income more closely into line with tax practice. As a result of last year's Budget, income derived from bank interest is now paid to savers net of tax, as has long been the case with income from building society interest. We have therefore amended the regulations so that, in assessing students' and parents' income, any interest received net of tax will be grossed up by the standard rate of tax.

I will refer briefly to the remaining changes which represent essentially technical adjustments to the regulations.

First, it has been a long-standing policy that a student should not be entitled to an award for a first degree or comparable level course if he has previously successfully completed such a course, regardless of whether or not public support was received for the previous course. The regulations have therefore been amended to ensure that correspondence courses leading to first degree and comparable qualifications are taken into account in determining a student's entitlement to an award.

Second, under the regulations students who attend a course for a period in excess of 30 weeks and three days receive for the excess period support in the form of a supplementary maintenance payment. Exceptionally, students of Oxford or Cambridge university qualify for this so-called extra weeks' allowance after 25 weeks and three days. Previously, Oxford and Cambridge students were able to claim this allowance after 25 weeks and three days even though they had been spending a year of their course at another institution, studying alongside students who were eligible for the allowance only after 30 weeks and three days. To remove this anomaly, the regulations have been amended so that payment of the extra weeks' allowance to Oxford or Cambridge students begins after 25 weeks and three days only when they are studying at Oxford or Cambridge.

Finally, where a student leaves a course part way through the year the regulations require that his grant

entitlement be adjusted accordingly. Although it has long been the practice that in such cases any assessed parental contribution be correspondingly adjusted, the regulations this year have been amended to ensure that this adjustment is made.

I shall take up briefly some of the points made by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish. He spoke about the timing of the regulations and I acknowledge and regret that it causes problems for local authorities. I shall not weary the House by reading out the record on timing since 1962 when the mandatory awards were initiated. If I did, the hon. Gentleman would discover that the regulations have always been laid in July and August under successive Governments.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: That has always been wrong and there is no merit in perpetuating a bad practice.

Mr. Walden: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that there are real difficulties that involve the social security system, which make the present timing of the regulations almost unavoidable although it causes problems for local authorities. We shall try to do better in future.

Responsibility for any changes in social security benefits rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. He will undertake consultations before the introduction of any new measures. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we are alive to the implications of any such changes, especially for mature students.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish implied that bank loans have created new problems and that students are getting into debt. We must recognise that most students are old enough to behave responsibly with banks and that most banks — this is my experience — have a fairly responsible attitude to lending. This is an area from which the nanny state can stand back for a moment and assume that individuals, especially students, are old enough and sensible enough to look after their own interests.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Walden: I shall not — *[Interruption.]* I hear some comments from my hon. Friends behind me about the time. I am aware especially of the length of my speech. However, this is a detailed subject. I conclude my remarks by commending the regulations to the House.

10.58 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I welcome this short debate. I shall be as brief as I can in making my contribution to it. The history of the debate is that it was originally to be a prayer. The hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice) and I spent many happy morning hours queueing outside the Table Office because of the amazing procedure that we have in this place. The hon. Gentleman finally beat me when I arrived one morning at 6 o'clock to see that he and his butler were already present. They were cooking eggs and bacon prior to an early morning meal.

I welcome the Minister to his position. I am given a nod, for which I am grateful. It was good news that we were to have in his position a man untainted by the smell of the manure of power. We believed that it would be helpful to the higher education sector if we were to have someone at the Department with new thoughts. Having heard his speech, I feel that within it there was a sort of hopelessness, which we have come to associate with those in his office, but after that speech he can only improve, and I wish him well.

I wish I could believe that the regulations were part of a plan that would benefit education, but, I must tell the Minister, as I am sure he knows, that their purpose is to cut the student population to fit the projected and available budget. We regret that.

In the Green Paper the Secretary of State talked about the new Robbins principle. He confirmed that courses in higher education should be available to all those who would benefit from them and who wished to do so, but he qualified that by saying, "provided the benefit justifies the cost." Who is the arbiter of that? It will come as no surprise to anyone to learn that the Secretary of State is the sole arbiter, the sole person to see whether the "benefit justifies the cost", whatever that may mean.

The regulations against which we were going to pray and which we are now seeking to revoke are another nasty and devious way of making the Department of Education and Science's discredited projections and demands become a reality. I say again, with fear of boring the House, that higher education is being sacrificed on the altar of monetarism. That is not a policy to benefit education. We wonder whether the Government have a policy. [HON. MEMBERS: "What is the hon. Gentleman's policy?"] I shall come to that in a moment.

Let me run through the changes. The overall level of student grant has been increased by half the rise of inflation. That is a real term decrease of over 2 per cent., and the Minister well knows that the RPI does not reflect the student cost of living. Since the Government came to power there has been a 17 per cent. decrease in real terms. The minimum grant has gone, and with it has gone the gesture towards independence. I believe that that was a cost-effective gesture because it recognised that higher education was an investment for the nation as well as for the individual.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Freud: I shall not give way.

We would argue that it is right for the state to pay towards the support of its future. An ensured income is gone for 50,000 students. Parental contributions, as the House will know, are notoriously unreliable when it comes to income for students. The scales of parental contributions are changed. The Secretary of State is masquerading as a radical, as a convert to progressive contribution. The net result is a parental contribution increase of 270 per cent. on the 1979 figures. The proportionate cost to parents is up and the Government's share is down. It is privatisation with a vengeance.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *rose*——

Mr. Freud: Before 1979 one received an allowance for having a child in higher and further education. When tax allowance became child benefit, that went, because child benefit goes at the age of 19.

I want to talk briefly about changes in the travel grant. The Minister said that it had gone up fractionally by 5 per cent. That is rough justice, but there is more roughness than justice. I wonder whether the Department has looked carefully into cases of hardship, such as the case raised by the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), who talked

[Mr. Freud]

about the children of the Isles of Scilly. For instance, does the Minister know what happens at Lancaster university, where 1,300 students live in Morecambe? The fares that they have to pay instantly disadvantages those students by over £100. The problems at Warwick and East Anglia are not very different.

I believe that the saving on the entire package is around £30 million a year. That is about 250 yards of the Falklands airport runway. Some of it will go to science —about half, I think—but not all. There is no guarantee that that will go on.

In a nutshell, the regulations undermine the higher education system, cause hardship to the student population and substantial misery to parents. Some parents pay 19 per cent. of their net income before tax, after mortgage and life assurance, thus a couple on the same salary as the Minister receives has to pay £2,478 for the maintenance of one student at university. Anxiety does nothing for the environment in which the student has to learn. Anyone involved in higher or further education will tell the Minister that a worried, hungry or broke student is not an easy student to teach.

The Secretary of State has a preference for students to be financially dependent on ever-decreasing grants, rising parental contributions and jobs, although I guess that in the best of all worlds he would have liked students to borrow the money.

The Department of Education and Science has no policy, and every question that I have asked has shown that it has not done its homework either. Is the Department qualified to gauge what parents can afford? The answers that I have been given say no. Does it know about the availability of jobs? It has no idea. Does it know how to judge the effect on student take-up? The answer is no. It is trying to limit student take-up to the available money —the money that the Department has available.

By its very negativism the Department has disqualified itself from being able to be questioned. What better example than the Green Paper on student support, which was cancelled because loans were shown to be a non-starter? When the Minister next sees the Secretary of State, perhaps he will tell him of the disservice to the House of making a statement at the Dispatch Box and rescinding that statement by a written answer to a planted question. I say "planted" advisedly, because the question did not ask "when" he would publish the statement, but "whether" he would do so, presupposing that it would not be published.

That must not be allowed to be used as an excuse for silence. In the absence of any lead from the Department, we get creeping Fowlerism. When Phil Woolas, president of the National Union of Students, went to see the Minister's predecessor, he was told that decisions in respect of supplementary and housing benefits would be taken by the Department of Health and Social Security alone. The Department of Education and Science would have to wait to find out how its students would be able to support themselves. We believe that higher education is an investment—[HON. MEMBERS: "Who is we?"] We on these Benches. The Government feel that until we have an upturn in the economy they cannot spend more on that sector. I want to make it clear that we believe that there will be no upturn in our economy until we invest in higher education.

11.12 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The only remark that I shall content myself with on the speech by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) is that he is a good deal more convincing and entertaining as an advocate when he is being paid for it.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): What does the hon. Gentleman mean?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman's parade of platitudes and special pleading, in which he followed the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), was welcome only in so far as he welcomed my hon. Friend the Minister to his new responsibilities. That was all the more welcome because in his constituency he has one of the finest examples of an entrepreneurial university. It is an example that other universities might follow with profit.

However, I regret that in his remarks the hon. Gentleman ruled out——

Mr. Howells: What does the hon. Gentleman mean?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman asks me what I meant by what I have said. If he listens a little longer, he may discover.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Withdraw or explain it.

Mr. Hamilton: So far as I am aware I have said nothing that requires to be withdrawn. [HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."] I will withdraw any mention of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East if that satisfies the House. It will certainly satisfy the rest of the country.

In his speech today my hon. Friend the Minister once again ruled out any prospect of introducing student loans. In my view, that is greatly to be regretted. In the midst of the great controversy that occurred in relation to last year's student grants settlement that was one of the options that many Conservatives were led to be believe would be seriously considered. Another desirable reform — education vouchers — was proposed while we were in Opposition but rejected when we came to office. Many Conservative Members are wondering whether this is another example of what one of my right hon. Friends referred to as "post-war funk" at the Department of Education and Science as both those proposals represent highly desirable means of enfranchising many people who currently have no choice whatever in the education system.

This year we plan to spend about £700 million on student maintenance grants and it is right to inquire into the morality of that. My hon. Friend the Minister cogently pointed out that those in receipt of the grant can generally look forward to enhanced earning power in the future and that the grants come out of taxes paid by people who will not enjoy those advantages. As Professor Lord Bauer pointed out equally cogently, overseas aid is mainly paid for by poor people in rich countries and given to rich people in poor countries. The same immoral aspect is to be found in the student grant system. I therefore wonder why the Government have decided against even a consultation exercise in relation to student loans as I believe that the advantages would be great, not just for the taxpayer but for the students themselves.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): There would also be an advantage for students who at present cannot obtain

grants. Many of my constituents who live in the Durham county council area are refused grants for courses that would be eligible for grant in other education authority areas.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is quite right. Another disadvantage of the present system is that it restricts the amount of money going into education and especially into higher education because of the pressures on Government spending which exist under any Administration. In 1963 the Robbins report looked forward to 17 per cent. of people in the student age group being in higher education in 1980, but the figure has steadily declined and is now only 12 per cent. A loans system would be a means of infusing the education system with more funds.

This country is almost alone among western industrial countries in not having some kind of loan system in addition to or in place of student maintenance grants. The experience of other countries is an eloquent testament to the value of such a system. We have introduced a highly effective loan guarantee scheme in relation to small businesses. There is no reason why the same logic and reasoning should not be applied to higher education.

The injustices of the parental contribution system as it now operates have been pointed out by many hon. Members on many occasions. Such contributions now have to be made in 60 per cent. of cases, but the majority of those parents do not make the grant up to the extent expected of them and 7 per cent. refuse to make any contribution at all. The students affected therefore have a tough time and as there is no structured borrowing system to cover student loans they find it very difficult to borrow the money and to survive as happily as those who are paid for by the taxpayer.

I believe that students would also be more concerned about the quality of the education that they receive if they were not so dependent on state largesse and if it actually cost them something to obtain the benefits which in due course will be translated into economic improvement for themselves.

I welcome the change in the regulations to ensure that students will now be able to work during term time—I have always thought that a good thing—and to get paid for it. This is commonplace in other countries. For example, in the United States, between a third and a half of students work in order to support themselves, either wholly or partly, during term time. They usually do so on the campus and do jobs such as laundering, cleaning work, gardening, administrative work in the libraries and so on.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): The Minister said that it was a rarity for rich industrialists to go to university or polytechnics, but it is not a rarity on business administration courses. If no limit is put on the concession that people can earn what they like, that will provide a marvellous tax fiddle for the rich—they just sign on at a polytechnic course and their earnings will become tax-free.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is, I think, mistaking the import of the regulations. I encourage him to look at them again in a little more detail, because I do not think that is their consequence.

By providing students with the opportunity of supplementing their income in this way, we would be providing them with a ready and effective source of cash that would not distract them from their studies.

A study on this had been carried out in the United States by Professor Alexander Astin of the University College of Los Angeles. He examined the careers of 200,000 students at 350 colleges and concluded that if a student works for up to 20 hours a week on the campus, he or she is more likely to complete the course successfully. Therefore, there is nothing in the argument that this would be a distraction from academic studies.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. Indeed, my own father paid his way through university in the United States by working at night. That encouraged an attitude of independence, which is precisely what we seek from students. Is not it extraordinary that the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) should attack the Government for their attitude towards parental contributions, saying that it diminished independence, while at the same time being against a loans system, which would give students true independence?

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is quite right. Mention has already been made of the NUS grants campaign. I notice that Mr. Phil Woolas, the president of the NUS, said that the NUS was targeting certain Members of Parliament in marginal constituencies to try to put pressure on them by threatening to refuse to vote for them at the next general election if they do not support the NUS proposals for an increase in grant. It is interesting that my own constituency does not feature on the list of marginal seats nor, happily, does that of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Fallon). Mr. Woolas said:

> "Where the sitting MP is in a targeted student marginal we will put it to them straight — back our case for adequate student finance or we will vote you out."

That is an example of the kind of political corruption that student grants bring into our governmental system. If we ended the closed shop in student unions, we might turn the tables on Mr. Woolus, and perhaps the students would vote him out.

The Minister need not fear for the Government's popularity or for himself if he goes down the road towards student loans to introduce more freedom and flexibility into higher education. The Federation of Conservative Students, the largest student body in the country with more than 14,000 members, is also in favour of moving towards loans. I therefore encourage him to consider this matter again.

11.19 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) said that the grants system was in crisis. That is clearly the case, because wherever we look at education today there is crisis. We have teachers in revolt over their deplorably low salaries; many schools are literally falling down through decay and disrepair; there is great concern among university teachers about the level of investment in higher and further education; and the grants system is a mess. I understand that the committee of vice-chancellors has described the situation as being in an advanced state of decay and the NUS, in a restrained comment, described the grant system as being unsatisfactory and accused the Government of attempting to sweep the issue under the carpet.

The truth is, as has been said, that the Government promised a thorough review of the grant system. That has

[Mr. Max Madden]

not come about for the reasons that my hon. Friend outlined, but that in no way avoids the necessity for a thorough and comprehensive review of income support for all students. Indeed, I would strongly urge that that review be wholly independent and look at the income support of all those in full time education after the age of 16.

It is clear that student grants are too low. I will not go into the details which have been referred to by other hon. Members but it is clear that the value of student grants has fallen by something like 17 per cent. since 1979-80. It is also clear that a large number of students are facing considerable difficulties in trying to support themselves and at the same time undertake proper studies to secure their degrees and to advance their careers in their chosen subject.

We have also heard in this debate about the difficulties caused by the parental contribution. I understand that many students are caused considerable hardship as a result of their parents failing to pay part or any of their assessed contribution. Indeed, a survey carried out on behalf of the NUS found that as many as 43 per cent. of students did not receive the full amount due from their parents. That represents real hardship. The Government and successive Ministers have had great difficulty when challenged to say how they intend to overcome that. That situation will not ease given the extent of low pay and other difficulties which so many people are facing.

Many students are also facing difficulties over travel costs. Students used to be allowed to claim the travel costs that they incurred over a £50 element built into the grant. In November 1983 the Government announced the replacement of that system with a flat-rate payment of £100 for those who lived away from home or £160 for those who lived at home and travelled to college. Again the NUS conducted a survey which found that 47 per cent. of students living at their parental home spent more than £160 on travel while 32 per cent. of those living away from home spent more than £100 on travel. What the Minister has said tonight on travel costs is welcome, but clearly it does not go far enough. Indeed, it does not reflect the recent news of a substantial increase in rail fares—as much as 8 per cent. or 10 per cent.—which will clearly affect many students in the coming year. Again, it makes the case for the Government announcing as early as possible what the grant will be for the coming year.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The Minister dodged that.

Mr. Madden: He did indeed. We are obviously aware of the hon. Gentleman's difficulties as he comes new to the post, but nevertheless we hope that by another planted question or some other means he will be able to say very soon what the grant for 1986-87 will be. We should remind him that if that grant is to come anywhere near restoring the value of the grant it should be well over £2,100.

I regret that much of this debate has been conducted against a giggling clack of Conservative Members who have shown their usual interest in education matters by keeping up a sustained barrage of giggling and laughter throughout most of the debate which will not go unnoticed by those students and others involved in education who take an interest in these matters and the way in which they are debated in the House.

Bradford university is in my constituency. As a result of cuts in 1981, Bradford, Ashton and Salford universities suffered exceptional and deep cuts. It is estimated that the cuts took about £6 million out of the local Bradford economy. If the Government continue to refuse to pay a grant—which does not reflect the loss in value of the grant lost since 1979—they will again inflict damage on the economies of Bradford and other university cities. I hope that they will take that into account when reaching decisions on the grant for 1986-87.

The Federation of Conservative Students apart, students recognise that they are campaigning to protect and increase their income. They have common cause with those who are trying to increase child benefit and pensions. They share a common objective with those fighting to defend the welfare state and to ensure that unemployed, sick and disabled people who depend upon the state, receive benefits which enable them to lead worthwhile and useful lives.

We are investing in students. They are investing their lives for the benefit of our society. It is incumbent upon us and the Government to ensure that they have the maximum support; that they are encouraged to study.

We want to broaden access to higher education. One of the major indictments of this Government's policy is that it denies access to higher education to young people from working class homes. We want to revoke the order, which does nothing to help students or higher education.

11.28 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I do not ask for any more money, rather that the money available is more justly distributed. The balance for student finance could be made up if the Government were prepared to lean on our cartelised clearing banks. I cannot believe that any Conservative Government would wish to start from here. No Conservative Government could or would, of their own volition, dredge up such a cocktail of injustice.

How can one say to an 18-year-old "You are an adult with all the rights and responsibilities of adulthood unless you happen to come from a relatively well-off family"? Let us look at the problem from the adult student's view. Is it right that for every three who receive a grant as of right, another seven are dependent on the financial good will and resourcefulness of their parents; not only that, that they have to rely upon the administrative diligence of their parents? I do not know how many people realise what a bureaucratic nightmare it is to fill out a second tax return on behalf of one's student children.

What does one say to a young person qualified for university who has fallen out with his parents or whose parents do not believe in higher education? Is he less equal in the state's eyes? Is that a correct concept for a party of one nation? What does one say to the daughter whose parents have relatively restricted means and whose real residual income bears no relation to the calculation set out by the local education authority? What does one say to a daughter whose parents decide that they will fork out for their son but not for her? I declare a modest interest—not to my own advantage, but purely as an illustration. I have five children, aged between 14 and 22. I wonder whether the Government have any idea of the cost and difficulty of bringing up five children, and of getting them through A-levels. Do they really think that there is cash available for the older siblings when the younger ones are still at home?

What advice would the Government give to a family with one child in private education and one child in higher

education when the family cannot afford to finance both? Would the Government suggest that they take the child out of private education? The state would then pay for his education and there would be money available for the child in higher education. Is that Conservative Government policy? Why is it that those students who are financed by covenant are taxed on all their earnings when their more fortunate colleagues, who get a full grant from the state, obtain a tax allowance as well? Is there a feeling somewhere in Elizabeth house that students can control how they are financed?

The Government may not provide a solution to these problems, but there is an easy solution available to all those moderately successful couples who have children in higher education, children with the potential for it, or even available to those who may have children with the potential for higher education. They can get divorced, or if they are more far-sighted, they can go in for planned illegitimacy. In that way they will pay less personal tax, they will be able to have a larger mortgage and, when the time comes, they will not have to pay any damned deemed parental contribution. Is that the course of action the Government want our people to pursue? Is that what the party of the family really believes in?

11.31 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Like other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I welcome the debate and congratulate the Minister on his appointment. I am sure that all hon. Members will appreciate having as the Minister for higher education someone with his extremely distinguished academic background. If his political acumen is half as distinguished as his academic and intellectual achievments so far, the House, and higher education in general, will benefit.

The Minister's start was not however, as auspicious as he or the House might have liked. As the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) said, the Minister appeared to flounder and then drown in the prose of his departmental brief. He might be well advised to throw away that brief or to rewrite it radically next time. I am sure that there were some ideas of his own struggling to emerge from that rather crabbed prose.

The important subject of higher education cannot be addressed in the very short time available. The House does not debate higher education nearly enough, yet the plight of students and the state of their income is enough to give anyone cause for concern over the state of education and the future of industry. It should be the subject of serious and sustained debate in the House.

The Minister had a chance tonight to explain the Government's thinking and to lay out the principles behind it. He should have stood at the Dispatch Box and told us what the grant for 1986 and 1987 would be. He should have told the House what principles it would be based on, and he should have explained to the 450,000 students waiting to hear what will happen to their financial provision next year. He wholly failed to do that. He did not even attempt to outline his thinking. Even though he is new to his job, he should realise that the Secretary of State announced this year's grant more than 12 months ago. Why should students have to wait even longer, perhaps for a written reply that is sneaked into the *Official Report*, before being able to understand what will happen in 1986 and 1987? When the Minister replies, he really should address himself to that. However, as he wholly failed to do so in his opening remarks he may not do so when he replies, but he should at least tell us when he will announce the sum and explain the workings behind assessing it.

The Minister should explain the Government's priorities. There are various ways of considering student grant. It could be considered as a matter of social justice, on a comparative basis against the income that students could be earning had they not elected to go on to higher education — we must attract the necessary quality of mind for the future development of our country—on a simple cost basis against the retail prices index and the increased travel costs that students face, or as a question of efficiency. Any of those criteria or a combination of them, could be employed by the Minister. I hope that he will help the House understand the issue by saying which of those criteria he will apply. At the very least, the Minister should tell students this year what will happen to them in 1986-87.

11.36 pm

Mr. Walden: I am grateful for the brief time that I have available to reply to the many points raised on both sides of the House, which I shall do rapidly for obvious reasons.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) must have been thinking up his obscure reflections on the corruption of power rather than listening to my speech on the state of education. He spoke of the undermining of the educational system, whereas I went to particular lengths to explain that one reason why we are constrained to take what I would describe as a responsible and realistic attitude towards student grants is the rise in the number of students in higher education and the fact that there is a limited pool of resources on which that larger number can draw. There was no reflection of that in his remarks, although I am not remotely surprised by that.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to be very sorry for students—so am I. There is no getting away from the fact that there has been a reduction in the purchasing power of their grants — incidentally, ever since mandatory grants were introduced in 1962. That is a point worth remembering.

The hon. Gentleman also seemed to be very sorry for parents—so am I, for obvious reasons. They must pay more, and one sympathises with them on that score. He showed no sympathy for the taxpayer. I must repeat that many people paying tax on a low level of income are supporting those privileged to go on to higher education who will earn high salaries later in life.

On the position of Lancaster university, I am aware in general terms of the difficulty there and at other places. The Government are watching to see whether any local initiatives arise to solve the problem. I am watching to see whether the pattern of student accommodation changes to alleviate the problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) concentrated mainly on student loans. I want to stress that the Government's position is that there is no intention to introduce them at the present time. I am sure that he is aware of the main reasons why we are reluctant to do that. The first is the initial expense involved, the second is that student loans risk hitting the lower income section hardest, and the third is that even where they operate on the Continent, there appears to be a high degree of administrative complexity. Our present system is complicated enough, and we do not want to replace it by

[Mr. Walden]

something even worse. I want to stress again my phrase, "at the present time". No one can accuse the Government of not having given the question of student loans a fair debate.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) called the present system a mess. I describe it more as a patchwork, although I admit that it looks better from a distance than from close up.

The question of income support for all students is more a slogan than a serious suggestion. The cost of that has been estimated at more than £500 million.

I am sorry to have to confirm that the figure of 17 per cent. that has been mentioned in relation to the fall in student incomes since 1979 is roughly correct. I again draw attention to the fact that the real value of student grants has fallen since 1962. Maybe it is another case of Governments in the past having promised rather too much too soon.

I agree that parents not giving their children the full assessed amounts is a lamentable situation. Even the NUS acknowledges that the shortfall is sometimes quite small; it is not just a case of 43 per cent. getting no contribution from their parents. They may be £50 short.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: It is still a considerable sum.

Mr. Walden: I agree, and the Government would welcome constructive suggestions on how we might help to overcome the problem, short of legislation, which I would regard as a sledge hammer.

Moving from patchwork to cocktails, though the message is the same, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) seemed to develop a moral philosophy of student grants which, as usual, I found impressive and deeply felt. However, having started on what seemed to be a high moral level, he finished by advocating immorality. The position is that, where parents do not ordinarily live together, the parental contribution is assessed on the income of whichever parent the local education authority considers to be most appropriate. This income may include maintenance payments from the other parent.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) seemed more concerned with prose style than substance, though I thank him for his elaborate welcome, part of which I pocket and the rest of which I reject.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, proceedings thereon lapsed pursuant to the Order of the House [22 November].

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Employment Subsidies Act 1978 (Renewal) (Great Britain) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 23rd October, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved. —*[Mr. Durant.]*

Question agreed to.

Welsh Grand Committee

Ordered,

That during the proceedings on the matter of the Elderly in Wales, the Welsh Grand Committee have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it shall meet; and that, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 67 (Meetings of standing committees), the second such sitting shall not commence before Four o'clock nor continue after the Committee has considered the matter for two hours at that sitting.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Handicapped Children

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

11.45 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I apologise to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for keeping him up at this late hour. If he were to join those families who have chosen to adopt a handicapped child, he might get used to it. Before then, he would have to get through the hurdle of being approved by the local authority. One is asked whether one has secure employment. I hope that my hon. Friend feels, as I do that there is no reason to suppose that our employment is anything but secure.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to bring this subject up for five reasons. First, this is the month that the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering has launched its appeal for £200,000 towards its excellent work in placing children with special needs. This month we are celebrating the 2,000th placing in 17 years.

Secondly, 1985 is the year in which the Exodus campaign has reminded us that many hundreds of children are still in long-term care in mental hospitals, despite repeated claims by Ministers over many years that they are not the right environment in which to bring up children.

Thirdly, this is the year in which BAAF has produced an excellent publication—"Against the odds: adopting mentally handicapped children" by Catherine Macaskill. I have a spare copy if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State would like to glance at it. The author describes the timing of this study as crucial to the changes that have occurred earlier in the United States and the revolution that is occurring in this country.

Fourthly, this year has seen a great crusade for the sanctity of human life. More than 2 million signatures were on a petition presented to the House. This has occurred at the same time as BAAF's director, Mr. Tony Hall, has appealed about the desperate shortage of families willing to take the children who are in long-term care.

Fifthly, there is my personal interest, arising out of having fostered a handicapped child for two years. I hope that adoption can soon take place.

My purpose in requesting this debate is, I regret to say, to make the usual call for more funding. I hope that my hon. Friend will listen particularly to the special reasons for my plea, because he is probably aware that I have not often called for more Government expenditure. I should like to link that with a request for more centralised co-ordination of services for handicapped children who need placement families.

I think that I share a common purpose with the Government. In a recent letter, Baroness Trumpington wrote to the leader of the Exodus campaign, Mrs. Peggy Jay, stating:

> "We do have a common purpose, to achieve better alternative provision for mentally handicapped children at present in hospital. The only difference between us is in how this can best be achieved."

Much of the present spending is wasted. We do not have the exact figures, but it must be costing more than £10 million a year to keep 1,000 children in long-term residential care in NHS hospitals in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and a similar sum to keep children in long-term care in local authority hostels. This money will be wasted if it fulfils an objective that runs counter to the Government's policy that children should not be there in the first place.

I link my appeal with humanitarian grounds. In 1946, nearly 40 years ago, the Curtis committee said that these children are the most deprived of all, yet we are still debating the subject. Government Ministers have said repeatedly that the Government's aim is to get these children out of long-term hospitals. Cmnd. 9674 which was published last week states that the Government's aim is to get all long-stay children out of hospitals for the mentally handicapped. They have asked all health authorities to ensure that these children are identified and that their needs are reviewed jointly.

We have a common purpose, but I question whether the Government's policies are working satisfactorily. My experience is that with these children it is more like the game "Pass the parcel." The policy of leaving this job to local authorities is not working. The evidence is contained in the Government's survey of local authority social services for handicapped children. If my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has not yet had an opportunity to refer to this document I can show him a copy. It refers to the work being done by local authorities.

May I also refer my hon. Friend to Catherine Macaskill's book and to my personal experience. Catherine Macaskill's book contains 20 case studies. Nine of the families first approached voluntary agencies while 11 of them first approached local authorities. The 11 families who approached local authorities saying that they were interested in taking a handicapped child were rejected. It was only when those 11 families approached voluntary agencies that they were given any sort of encouragement. The local authorities told them nothing at all or fobbed them off with unhelpful remarks.

The attitude of social workers can be too negative. May I refer my hon. Friend to page 94 of Catherine Macaskill's study. She describes what it is like for a family that says that it would like to adopt a second handicapped child. Such families are regarded as being not only singularly odd but doubly odd. She said:

> "Applicants for a second handicapped child were not generally viewed favourably. Some adoption workers expressed the view that the stress associated with integrating one handicapped child was more than enough for any family. One project leader had no hesitation in expressing her verdict: 'Im dubious about it. I think we need to think about how the family look in the community. If a family adopt one handicapped child, they are considered odd — if they adopt two, they're considered even odder.'"

Of the few adoptions of children who have been difficult to place that my local authority has arranged in Bolton, half of them went to one family. This shows the division between what families are able to offer and what some local authorities are prepared to understand.

My experience was that after telling the local authority that we were interested in fostering or adopting a handicapped child nothing happened for two years. We discovered later that 30 miles away the same local authority had at the same time been advertising a child for 18 months. We found out about the child who is now with us only when we were on holiday in Majorca. We read an advertisement in *The Guardian*. The same local authority was dealing with us and with that child, but two different offices were involved. There was a complete lack of liaison.

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

I called upon the excellent officer in charge of social services in Bolton, North-East, Miss Barbara Swayles, and asked her whether she knew of any handicapped children who needed to be adopted or fostered. She made inquiries and said that there was none. The following week I visited the Elizabeth Ashmore home for handicapped children in Bolton. It is run by an excellent lady by the name of Mrs. Jean Farnworth. I asked her if she had any handicapped children who were in need of fostering or adoption. She said that she had three and that she had been looking for parents for them for up to five years, and yet a divisional officer of a different division only two miles away, although still within Bolton local authority, did not know about them.

The social worker responsible for those children told me that the local authority had for years been making vigorous efforts to place those children. How vigorous can those efforts have been when they were so completely unsuccessful? We must regard such children as the truly forgotten children.

The Government's study shows a number of weaknesses. To start with, it does not contain one number. It is one of the most extraordinary documents that I have ever read. That is brushed off with the explanation that there was great difficulty in collecting reliable information.

I refer my hon. Friend to paragraph 7.222. It states:

"The chances of a handicapped child being placed in a substitute family varied widely from place to place."

We can see why from what I have just said.

Paragraph 7.228 states:

"Adoption of handicapped children is achieved very rarely."

That is hardly surprising.

Paragraph 7.410 says, "Pressure of work" — one wonders what work it was—

"prevented one authority from taking into care any children in hospital who had lost touch with their parents."

What work could that local authority have been doing that was more important?

Page 89 of the Government's report recommends:

"Every local authority department should consider fostering and adopting."

That is a weak recommendation. Page 90 deals with, "Children with profound handicap." That chapter does not mention fostering or adopting. It confirms the view held by many social workers that the more difficult the child's need the more unlikely it is that the child can be placed. That is contrary to what Catherine Macaskill found. She found that the challenge that the more profoundly handicapped children present to would-be adoptive parents makes them in many cases keener to take the children who have the greatest needs, and yet local authority workers tend to view them as the ones least likely to be placed.

Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the points that have emerged from the survey? Does he not consider that it shows that there is a failure by local authorities to collect the parcel that the Government are offering them? Does he think that it displays a failure by the staff in his Department fully to understand the potential of placing children with difficult needs? The social workers are failing to understand the revolution that is occurring. It started in America and it is now here. It is most important that people recognise that fact. The Government's survey also pointed to the need for legislation to tidy up uncertainties. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend would comment on that point.

I would like the Government to review their policy on this matter and to estimate the cost of setting up a standard national minimum adoption allowance. BAAF called strongly for that. It is felt that the present system is crazy. In the United States, the adoption of children with special needs by low income families has been made much more possible by the standard adoption allowances that prevail there. Only 65 of our local authorities out of 128 have approved adoption schemes. That is 10 years after the Children Act 1975 was passed. That does not take account of special needs because the Disablement Income Group has estimated that it costs £130,000 to bring up a severely handicapped child compared with £70,000 for a normal child.

The present scheme is described as experimental and it is due to lapse in 1989. Does my hon. Friend think that it is now time for the Government to grasp the nettle and introduce a standard national minimum allowance for adoptive parents? If we set the figure at £50 a week and enabled another 1,000 families to take children it would cost £2·5 million a year. The numbers are difficult to get at. The Government have access to a lot more information, and I challenge them to produce a costing.

Attempts have been made to get the figures, and local authorities have told the National Foster Care Association that they would be willing and able to submit figures of payments to foster parents of handicapped children in their returns to the DHSS. I was shattered to learn from a written answer by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health on 20 November that the Government did not feel that the information was necessary. As the local authorities say that they are willing and able to provide the details, it is offhand for the Government to say that they do not want them.

We have some information about the numbers. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 3,000 severely mentally handicapped children are born each year in the United Kingdom; there are also about 2,000 abortions of what would have been severely handicapped infants. The vast majority of severely handicapped children live with their natural parents and the support services are much welcomed, but the work done by Madeline Simms at the Institute for Social Studies in Medicine shows the strains on many of these families. In a recent survey reported in *The Lancet* on 2 November, she showed that two thirds of mothers of mentally handicapped young adults said that they wished they had had an abortion. That shows the acute need for post-adoptive services to encourage would-be adopters.

We know that it costs up to £20,000 per annum to keep a child in institutional care in London, and the latest figures that I have for Bolton show that it costs £19,000 per annum to keep a severely mentally retarded child in institutional care there. I hope that the Government do not underestimate the cost of transferring children from the NHS. I note that the White Paper issued last week showed that the money available had been increased from £9 million to £10·5 million, to be made available over an unspecified period, but that is a paltry subsidy for children who must be costing the NHS at least £10 million a year. Professor Lawrence of Cardiff recently estimated the lifetime cost of caring for a Down's syndrome child at £250,000. Against those costs, £2,000 to place a child in

the BAAF "Be my Parent" book seems paltry, yet many local authorities claim that they cannot afford even the modest proportion of that fee which BAAF charges them.

I recommend the Government to review policy in this area and introduce a national minimum adoption allowance, on the United States model, without delay. That would allow BAAF to get on with promoting its schemes nationally. The Government should also recognise the inability of local authorities to make placements of children with special needs. Each child is different, and each family is different. It is not easy to link the two. The policy of leaving that task to local authorities is clearly not working.

I urge the Government to increase the grant to BAAF and the other voluntary services, such as Parent to Parent and Parents for Children, which do such excellent work. I am sure that a double grant would be cost effective. I also ask the Government to produce additional funds for post-adoptive services, especially for adolescents. Workers in this area say that there is a vacuum when children reach 18 or 19. Many parents adopting handicapped children must wonder what will happen when the children reach that age.

I do not believe that local authorities can co-ordinate joint services properly. Surveys show how they are struggling, and the recommendations of the 1976 Harvie committee have still not been implemented.

One of the most important aspects of post-adoptive services is respite care, which could help to avoid a number of the breakdowns that might occur if more children were placed. The Parents for Children survey showed that 14 of 89 placements over eight years broke down for this and other reasons. I recommend that there should be at least one place for each 12 who are mentally handicapped, so that the necessary care can be provided. I look forward to seeing the Government's resources guide, which I understand is to be published shortly.

I wonder whether my hon. Friend could persuade other newspapers to follow the lead of *The Guardian*, which carries a monthly advertisement of a child in need? Does he agree that the *Daily Telegraph* would be a much better newspaper if it showed the same enlightened attitude? If standard adoption allowances were introduced, does my hon. Friend accept that that would be an excellent basis on which to advertise in *The Sun* as well? We could have a page 3 *Sun* child of the week.

The Exodus campaign should be recognised now by publicising the list of local authorities, and not merely a list of health authorities, with children in long-term care. That would enable pressure to be brought on the local authorities with any new legislation that may be necessary to help us transfer children who are in National Health Service hospitals.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity of inititating this Adjournment debate at such a critical time. I look forward to my hon. Friend's reply. I hope that the clock has not been running too fast in the limited time that is available to us.

12.6 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am happy to respond to the debate, which was initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). He made entirely unnecessary apologies for the lateness of the hour. As he said, those of us who have had children are well experienced in being awake at this hour. I am aware of his experience with the child whom he fostered and the great contribution that he has made broadly to the subject that he has brought to the attention of the House tonight. That contribution is well recognised and it is of much value to the House and to the several causes which he has espoused. I shall try to cover the major issues which my hon. Friend has raised, but the rules of the House will, I am sure, prevent me from covering all the ground. In any event, some of the issues which he has raised are of considerable importance and I should like the opportunity to study them carefully before reacting.

I reinforce the remarks of my hon. Friend about BAAF, the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. We both had the privilege of taking part in recent celebrations and a most impressive press launch. I record my great pleasure at being able to participate and to see some of the children, who demonstrated how they had benefited—the same can be said of the families—from the fostering that has been the result of BAAF's initiatives. I hope that our commitment is clear to the objectives of BAAF and to the principle of placing children who need it in a family environment, especially the work that it has done to foster the adoption of children with special needs. It has made great strides in that area of its work over recent years and it had celebrated its 2000th placing.

The Government have a record of which they should be proud. We would all like to do more, and my hon. Friend will recognise the financial constraints within which Governments must necessarily operate, but we have given substantial support both to BAAF and to other agencies. In money terms, that support will amount to a sum slightly less than £300,000 in this financial year. We support the specialist agency that is called Parents for Children and our grant last year was £54,000. As my hon. Friend says, he is not one who is in the habit of calling constantly for more money, and I know that to be true. He will recognise the inevitable constraints that all Governments must concern themselves with, and especially this Government, who rightly pay the closest attention to keeping public spending under control. However, since taking office in 1979, our spending on the personal social services has increased in real terms by no less than 20 per cent., which is a formidable record. Our contributions to voluntary agencies has increased from just over £7 million when we took office to over £30 million now, which is a significant increase in real terms.

It is also true that we are not talking entirely about what the Government should or can do. That is an area where there must be the maximum co-operation among central Government, local authorities and the voluntary sector. BAAF and its resource exchange are excellent examples of such co-operation.

My hon. Friend spoke about the need to get children out of mentally handicapped hospitals and into the community and the efforts of the campaign called Exodus. I should like to pay tribute to Exodus. As my hon. Friend recognised, it is the objective of this Government, and of previous Governments, to get as many children as possible out into the community. I believe that we are making significant progress in that direction.

I offer the House two figures that demonstrate that claim. In 1982 the number of children in National Health Service mentally handicapped hospitals was 2,421 and two years later, at the end of 1984, it had fallen to 1,074. That

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

is a dramatic fall, which we should all acknowledge and pay tribute to. The funds used to achieve that included £1 million made available from 1981 from central finance on a £1 for £1 basis to voluntary bodies. From 1983-84 we devoted £10·5 million to health authorities to help to get children out of hospitals.

We must proceed at a measured pace and ensure that all placements are suitable. I am sure that my hon. Friend would be the first to agree that to get such a placement wrong would be more damaging than not to seek to remove a child from the hospital in the first place. A great deal of collaboration is necessary as well as a great deal of training of professional and other staff. That was the subject of the Court report and the Jay report.

My hon. Friend referred several times to one of the reports by the social services inspectorate of the Department. It is true that there is a patchy performance among local authorities. Some are undoubtedly better than others; many are a good deal better than others. The function of the social services inspectorate is to bring out the best factors so that they are adopted and followed throughout the country. That was one of the major objectives of the report to which my hon. Friend referred. I am sure that we have a long way to go, but we recognise the fundamental structure of local government and its statutory responsibilities. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that there are strict limits as to how far we could or should go from the centre. We can provide training, funds, advice and example, but at the end of the day we have to continue to strive for a balance between the agencies involved—central Government, the local authorities and the voluntary agencies.

I should like to believe that we are moving in the right direction, but I recognise that there are areas where improvements will always be necessary.

As time is closing in, I should like to write to my hon. Friend about the points that he has made on the adoption allowance scheme. As he knows, after the introduction of the adoption allowance scheme, which was a controversial measure, the recommendation was that there should be research. That is now being carried out by the National Children's Bureau. The Secretary of State will report to the House by February 1989. I believe that that is the right way to go because it is an important area. It takes time to identify the benefits and any problems that arise. I welcome the fact, as does my hon. Friend, that the take-up by local authorities has been much wider than envisaged——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at fifteen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

CONTINGENCIES FUND 1984

Ordered,

That there be laid before the House accounts of the Contingencies Fund, 1984-85, showing:

(1) the receipts and payments in connection with the Fund in the year ended 31st March 1985, and

(2) the distribution of the capital of the Fund at the commencement and close of the year; with the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General thereon.—*[Mr. Moore.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Local Overseas Allowance

1. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations his Department has received concerning Her Majesty's forces local overseas allowance; and if he will make a statement.

5. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the present levels of local overseas allowances for British forces in Germany; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): A number of representations were received from hon. Members and from service men in Germany following the reduction in local overseas allowance in Germany earlier this year. The reasons for this reduction were explained fully by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement when answering the debate on the Adjournment on 20 May.

I am satisfied that the LOA system represents an extremely important financial protection for service men when they are asked to serve in countries overseas that have a higher inflation rate than that in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lewis: I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's answer. The reduction in the local overseas allowance for BAOR troops has a certain pin-stripe logic in Whitehall, but it means a pay cut for the troops. I have discussed this with the troops. They tell me that single men in particular have suffered a pay cut of between £20 and £30 a month. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like having to listen to this, but I am afraid that they will have to. Will the right hon. Gentleman address himself to that matter?

Mr. Stanley: I must say to the hon. Gentleman and to those right hon. and hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench who support him that the pin-stripe logic to which he referred commended itself to the previous Administration. They operated the same LOA system as we operate. Where the differences in the cost of living narrow between the United Kingdom and an overseas country, the LOA is bound to be reduced. I ask the House to bear in mind that our service men in Germany, following the Government's adherence — unlike our predecessors—to the provisions of the armed forces pay review, have had a pay increase this year in excess of 7 per cent., although they are living in a country which enjoys an inflation rate of less than 3 per cent.

Mr. Speller: While I understand the reasons for the change in the LOA, its effects upon BAOR are becoming quite frightening. A number of young, highly-qualified technical soldiers have given notice that they wish to leave the Army. These soldiers may or may not accept the argument about a lower rate of inflation, but their greatest argument relates to transportation back to the United Kingdom, since transport charges are a complete "fix" under the cartel.

Mr. Stanley: I am glad to be able to tell my hon. Friend and the House that in the last few days we have announced an important concession. It will enable all service men to have the costs of the third school visit of their first child, for which at present they have to pay, met out of public funds. That concession will apply as from the school Christmas holidays. It has been widely welcomed in Germany.

Mr. McNamara: As it costs £2·8 million to train a fast-jet pilot for the central front, and as we are seeking to save only £17 million on the local overseas allowance, only eight pilots have to leave the Royal Air Force for all the savings that the Ministry of Defence hopes to make to be lost. The commercial airlines are recruiting vigorously among jet-trained pilots. Is this not another example of the Government being penny wise and pound foolish? They are seeking to make short-term cuts without considering the long-term interests of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman is confusing two completely separate issues. He rightly referred to the very considerable cost of training a fast-jet pilot. However, the relatively small adjustments of the LOA at the margin will not have a material effect upon the ability of the civil airlines to recruit trained RAF pilots.

Mr. Conway: Most people understand the reasoning behind the change, but I suspect that there would have been a great deal more support for it had there been an elongated introductory time scale to give service men a chance to adjust. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that this is not a false dawn for savings and that we are not losing the savings involved in this change to those who are opting for unaccompanied tours and the greater financial benefit that that involves?

Mr. Stanley: The reduction in LOA in Germany had some phasing in, which was designed to get over the particular problem to which my hon. Friend refers. I remind him that it is important to ensure that normally there is immediate application of LOA changes, because a large number of them are upwards, and we want to give the service men the benefit of the LOA increases, such as those that have recently taken place in Cyprus, Italy, Sardinia, Gibraltar, Portugal, the United States, Denmark Belize, Norway and Hong Kong.

Tornado Aircraft

2. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to complete negotiations with British Aerospace plc for an attrition order of Tornado aircraft for the Royal Air Force.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Norman Lamont): Negotiations are in progress on the purchase of nine additional Tornado GR1 aircraft to help offset expected attrition losses. Orders have been placed for essential long-lead time materials.

Mr. Atkins: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the order for the nine Tornadoes and, I hope, a few more, will be placed soon? Will he also confirm that the extra orders placed for Tornadoes for Saudi Arabia and Oman, which are much to be welcomed, will not affect the RAF order to replace the aeroplanes that have been taken out for the Saudi Arabian order?

Mr. Lamont: The time of a production order for these aircraft has to be considered in the context of the Saudia Arabian deal, but if we lose aircraft through accidents or whatever, they will have to be replaced.

There will be some diversion from the RAF to meet the Saudi deal. Our concern is to minimise that effect. We have a commitment to this aircraft, which will have to be replaced. However, the precise timing will depend on finance and on the extent of factors yet to be negotiated in the Saudi deal.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Would not the hon. Gentleman have saved himself some embarrassment if he had taken the advice given to him by the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) and ordered early so that he could have delivered both on time?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend understands, as the hon. Gentleman does not, that the point about diversity arises because the production lines at Warton will be full. Because of the substantial order obtained from Saudi Arabia, the production lines at Warton will be full well until the 1990s, and there will be excellent work for the European fighter aircraft programme as well.

Mr. Watkinson: Does my hon. Friend accept that the attrition rate for the Tornado in operational conditions on the central front will soon become high unless the aeroplane is equipped with an effective stand-off weapon? What progress is being made to procure such an air-to-surface missile?

Mr. Lamont: We are studying this matter jointly with other countries, because it is important to ensure that the Tornado is effective. As my hon. Friend knows, it is also important to maintain the mid-life update.

Procurement Programme

3. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is satisfied with the present methods of defence procurement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We continue to seek improvements in the way that we procure the equipment the services require for a price which gives the taxpayer best value for money. To this end we shall pursue vigorously the twin aims of expanding competition and collaboration.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why should defence contractors be able to hide behind rules of confidentiality from answering questions about the post-costing of defence contracts where excess profits have been made by them? Is the Minister aware that a prominent journalist wrote to me enclosing a list of post-costed defence contracts where excess profits had been made, all of which have been investigated by the Ministry of Defence? Is he aware, further, that I am prevented, by the rule of confidentiality, from raising that list in a public sitting of the Public Accounts Committee, when all those matters are in the public interest and should be made known to the public?

Mr. Lamont: I shall certainly look at that point. Post costing occurs in non-competitive contracts. It is done in confidence because some matters are commercially sensitive, and, even if the contract is non-competitive in the United Kingdom, the intention may be to sell the equipment overseas. Therefore, commercial confidentiality is important. However, I shall investigate what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Michael Marshall: Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the defence procurement arrangements for the European fighter aircraft, which, as well as the United Kingdom, involves Germany, Italy and Spain? Will he take this opportunity to say whether the apparent efforts by the French to come back into the scheme are too late?

Mr. Lamont: We are satisfied that work is proceeding with all speed on the project definition of the European fighter aircraft. As well as being a tremendous opportunity for British and European industry, it is a tremendous achievement. As for the French approach, we would have preferred the French to be in the project from the beginning, but we shall have to examine the details of what exactly they have in mind.

Mr. McWilliam: What assurances has the Minister given to Dennis Ferranti to enable it to go ahead with a massive capital expenditure on CNC lathes to make mortar shells, when those shells are currently made quite effectively by ROF Birtley?

Mr. Lamont: I am not familiar with the case that the hon. Gentleman raises, but if he writes to me I shall look into it.

Trident

4. **Mr. Franks** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress to date on the Trident programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Trident programme is progressing satisfactorily. I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) on 2 July 1985, at column *116*.

Mr. Franks: In January this year, when the sterling-dollar exchange rate was $1·09 to the pound, Labour and Liberal Members were highly critical of the cost of the Trident programme. Since then, there has been a 34 per cent. increase in the value of sterling, with a commensurate decrease in the credibility of the Opposition. Can we now assume that the Opposition parties have become enthusiastic supporters——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question relates to Trident, not to the Opposition parties.

Mr. Franks: Can we now assume that in relation to the Trident programme the Opposition parties are enthusiastic supporters, and does their care and concern about the cost and the jobs that go with it depend——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very long question.

Mr. Lamont: My right hon. Friend announced that the cost of Trident was £9·2 billion at 1984 prices, assuming an exchange rate of £1 to $1·38. If, as my hon Friend has said, the pound strengthens against the dollar, that will affect the price of Trident, given that there is a 45 per cent. import content. My right hon. Friend has stated to the House the effects of changes in the exchange rate—any hon. Member can calculate those for himself—and he will be presenting his annual estimate of the cost of the programme in the light of changes in the exchange rate.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Minister confirm that the British-manufactured warhead for the Trident missile will have to be tested, if not at the United States nuclear test site in Nevada, somewhere else?

Mr. Lamont: We shall have to carry out tests that are necessary, but I cannot confirm what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Sayeed: As and when Vickers is privatised, how does my hon. Friend intend to ensure that it does not abuse its monopoly position in the building of Ohio-class and SSN submarines?

Mr. Lamont: It is the Government's intention that there should be a number of submarine builders in this country, just as there are at present. Vickers has a monopoly, not of conventional, but of nuclear submarines. We envisage that there will be plenty of competition for conventional submarines, and I am certain that the privatisation of Vickers, which I am sure will be achieved shortly, will do nothing but good and will be good value for the taxpayer.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Is it not the case that the exchange rate is wholly outside the control of the Government and most other Governments? That means that if the cost of Trident is £10 billion, £5 billion in dollars is wholly outside the Government's control. Is that not a foolish financial arrangement, apart from the fact that it is ridiculous to spend that sum on a weapon which can never be used?

Mr. Lamont: One thing is certain. If we had attempted to build and develop the whole of Trident ourselves, it would have been an extremely expensive programme, and far more expensive than Opposition Members would have been remotely prepared to contemplate. At £9·2 billion, the programme is excellent value for money, given the deterrent power that Trident missiles and submarines have. That sum spent on any other weapon system could not purchase the equivalent deterrent capability.

Procurement Programme

6. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the priorities in his weapons procurement programme.

Mr. Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the details given in chapter four of the 1985 "Statement on the Defence Estimates", which describes the equipment that is coming into service or being developed for the armed forces to enable them to discharge their responsibilities to greatest effect.

Mr. Soames: Whatever the rights or wrongs of those priorities, will my hon. Friend assure the House that we shall never again see such a scandalous fiasco as the Nimrod programme? When can he come to the House and make a statement on the cost of Ptarmigan?

Mr. Lamont: Obviously, the Nimrod programme causes the Government considerable anxiety, and I hope to come to the House to make an announcement. At present we have completed our technical evaluation of options for development to an acceptable operating standard. We are discussing with the company proposals to reach that stage of development on a fixed-price basis. My hon. Friend is right in saying that this is a serious matter.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Minister aware that the phrase, "We would not mind getting back into chemical weapons, if the public could be persuaded," is a non-attributable phrase used by certain senior Whitehall officials? In view of the fact that the Secretary of State's answers to my recent questions have been evasive, ambiguous and insulting to people who have a right to know what Government policy is, will the Minister make a definitive statement about the Government's attitude to chemical weapons?

Mr. Lamont: We are trying to negotiate arms controls, and we are not planning to develop our chemical weapons. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has stated the position to the House on many occasions.

Mr. Merchant: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the regional economic dimension of weapons procurement policy, and consider the number of jobs, for example, on Tyneside, that are dependent on defence industries? Will he order his procurement policy in such a way that sufficient orders staged in the right way are maintained for such areas to keep the number of jobs at least stable, and preferably growing, in those industries?

Mr. Lamont: I note what my hon. Friend says. Obviously, with a £9 billion defence equipment budget, our first requirement must be value for money, and, in general, contracts must be awarded to the lowest bidders, but we also bear in mind the health of British industry. That is not to say that there are not occasions when other factors come into play.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: What priority do the promises made to Swan Hunter shipbuilders on Tyneside have in the Minister's weapons procurement programme?

Mr. Lamont: Swan Hunter has received large orders from the MOD in the past. Swan Hunter can tender for the type 23s in future, and it has done extremely well from the defence budget.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Trident programme has high priority and is important to Scotland because it provides steel orders for Ravenscraig, the tubes are made at Babcock, and because it provides jobs at Coulport and Rosyth? Does he agree, therefore, that Scotland has a deep interest in that programme, and that it should continue to have high priority?

Mr. Lamont: The Trident programme has a critical role, which is much appreciated. It also has a significant

effect on employment, because there are 17,000 direct jobs and 13,000 indirect jobs dependent upon it, which makes Opposition Members' concern about what will happen at Rosyth a little hypocritical.

Mr. McNamara: Reverting to the question of the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who started this exchange, what exactly does the phrase "acceptable technical standards" mean when applied to the new Nimrod radar? How does it differ from the original specifications laid down by the RAF for that type of radar? When with we have something to plug the gap in our radar defences?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman has, if I may say so, been here long enough to know that his first question cannot be answered in public.

Mr. Wallace: Does not the fact that one of the major priorities for the Government's defence procurement is the Trident missile system mean that there has been undue delay in the placing of other contracts for conventional weapon systems and that some of the equipment being used by our forces is becoming increasingly outdated? By concentrating on Trident and not spending money on conventional forces, is not the Minister missing an opportunity to raise the nuclear threshold?

Mr. Lamont: It certainly does not mean that, because Trident takes 3 per cent. of the defence budget and 6 per cent. of the equipment budget. Furthermore, Britain spends as a proportion of its total defence budget a higher proportion on equipment than any other country in NATO.

Highway Code

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department gives advice to visiting forces about adherence to the " Highway Code" during military exercises in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: No. We expect visiting forces to see that their drivers are made familiar with the provisions of the "Highway Code".

Mr. Davies: Does the Minister recognise that sufficient incidents have now occurred to suggest that United States forces personnel are either unaware of the provisions of the "Highway Code" or are deliberately flouting them? Is not that particularly serious when they are driving large vehicles in large convoys, often carrying nuclear weapons? Does he approve of the practice of United States cruise carriers driving round with stickers in their windscreens proclaiming:

"We don't brake for CND"?

Mr. Stanley: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that I do not believe that there is any evidence that United States service drivers commit more road traffic offences than anybody else. I can assure him that all United States service drivers have to pass a test, which is prescribed by all United States service authorities, before they are allowed to drive in the United Kingdom, and that includes a test of knowledge on the "Highway Code".

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: I recognise the driving skills of the United States Army in Britain. Surely the people who should be blamed are those members of the CND, especially Leicester CND, who deliberately get in the way of cruise convoy carriers as they are going from A to B. It is no good trying to pass the buck back to the United States Army.

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend is entirely right. Those who obstruct the public highway and vehicles that are on it are not merely endangering themselves but can be endangering others.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: How many launchers and missiles are now deployed in the United Kingdom, and have there been any new deployments in the past months?

Mr. Stanley: We have made clear the present situation in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" and we have also made clear the long-term deployment numbers. It is not my right hon. Friend's policy to give detailed arrival times, for obvious security reasons.

Aircraft Noise (Compensation)

8. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the progress of the departmental review on compensation for those living near operational Royal Air Force stations, and subject to significant disturbance from aircraft noise.

Mr. Stanley: The review has now been concluded and a number of improvements were announced in the reply that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 14 November, at columns *260-61*.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents living near RAF Cottesmore will warmly welcome the tone of the Department's response to their representations? Will he ensure that the number of people to get insulation this time will be rather more than the 10 who were offered it in the previous review?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments about the announcement. I recognise that he has been extremely persistent on behalf of his constituents in representing their concerns. We estimate that some 7,000 extra private dwellings around some 50 airfields will benefit from the new availability of noise insulation. As my hon. Friend will understand, I obviously cannot say how many more will benefit in the Cottesmore area, but I hope for his sake, and particularly for mine, that it will be rather more than previously.

Mr. Ashton: Can the Minister give a much better reply to those who complain about noise from low-flying aircraft and who will not get compensation? Is he aware that many of the answers that he gives are far from satisfactory? Could training involving low-flying aircraft take place on one day a week so that residents can be notified in advance and prepare themselves for the nuisance?

Mr. Stanley: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand the problem. It would not be possible for the RAF to be able to maintain the standards of proficiency and expertise required on the basis of training on one day a week.

Mr. Baldry: The announcement that the noise compensation scheme is to be introduced has been warmly welcomed by many people living near airfields. Can my right hon. Friend say when it will be known which houses and which parts of the villages are eligible for compensation?

Mr. Stanley: We shall have to carry out a set of new noise contour surveys around the airfields to be able to give that information. As my hon. Friend is aware, we are reducing the qualifying grant level from 75 to 70 decibels. We shall carry out the noise contour survey as rapidly as we can, but it may take some months for certain airfields, and even one or two years, or longer, to cover all 50 airfields. We shall press on as rapidly as possible.

Arms Control

9. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has made to the United States of America Administration regarding the arms control talks in Geneva.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Michael Heseltine): The Government have been in close consultation with the United States Administration on their approach to the arms control talks at Geneva, most recently when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary took part in President Reagan's meeting with the North Atlantic Council after his meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. They made it clear that we welcomed the successful outcome of the meeting, and fully supported United States positions at the Geneva negotiations.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Secretary of State accept that we are now in a new situation with the atmosphere that was created at last week's summit? Does he agree that it is now time to consider asking the Americans to stand down on the issue of the strategic defence initiative research programme and the further deployment of cruise missiles in Britain, in order to give the Geneva talks a chance to achieve the radical reductions in nuclear arsenals that we all want to see?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman signally fails to understand that the reason for the better relationship between the superpowers is that we did not follow that advice.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the policy advocated by the Opposition were to be implemented — the unilateralist approach — that could substantially undermine the negotiations now taking place in Geneva?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. and learned Friend is correct. If the Western Alliance had followed the advice of the Labour party there would be no negotiations, because it would have thrown away all the cards in advance.

Mr. Duffy: The Secretary of State and his right hon. Friend will be aware that the two superpowers have been close to agreement for some time on non-proliferation and a chemical ban. Does he not think that those are matters on which urgent representations might have been made so that at least something could have resulted from last week's talks?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, who has much experience of such matters, will realise that widespread and wide-ranging advice has been available on all matters. There has been the closest consultation in the Western Alliance on all issues of arms control.

Mr. Nelson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be a gross error of judgment, whatever concessions may be made in later negotiations, for SDI to be conceded at this stage? Does he also agree that the more pressing priority is to give real impetus and concrete terms to an interim agreement on a reduction in intermediate nuclear forces?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that all those matters will be weighed within the consultative process of the Alliance. The House must realise that no agreement is possible now or at any time, on the research programmes involved in the strategic defence initiative, because many of those programmes will continue into the technologies that will be at the heart of the civil and military capabilities of tomorrow, whether or not there is a defence initiative.

Mr. Strang: Is it the case that one area where progress might be made following the summit is on an agreement covering intermediate forces in Europe? In that context, is it not unreasonable to expect the Soviet Union simply to ignore Britain's missiles? Will the Government review their policy of refusing to count Polaris or Trident among the number of missiles and warheads in Europe?

Mr. Heseltine: I cannot see what interest the hon. Gentleman thinks he serves by persuading Britain and, I presume, France to trade in their intercontinental deterrence systems to try to persuade the Russians to reach an intermediate agreement. We have always made it clear, from the date of the 1979 twin track decision, that an agreement was available on the intermediate range nuclear weapons systems. It still is.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. Friend recall Winston Churchill's famous words: "Peace through a balance of terror."? Does he agree that the talks will be successful because we are negotiating with a balance of terror?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend has most successfully put the very words in my mouth.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Secretary of State give the House some information about his discussions with the United States on United Kingdom participation in SDI? What percentage of the £26 billion over five years does he expect to get for British industry? What effect does he expect it to have on scientific research and development in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Heseltine: I have had very detailed conversations with my colleague Caspar Weinberger of the United States about two issues in connection with the research programme for the strategic defence initiative: first, that there should be a proper reflection of this country's technological capability and recognition of the dangers of a one-way flow of technology across the Atlantic; and, secondly, that it should be recognised that, for Britain to play a part, it has to be significant. I am glad to be able to tell the House that Mr. Weinberger and I reached agreement to recommend to our respective Governments the form of undertaking that we could enter into. I hope very much that we shall be able to make positive progress on that matter in the near future. In that case, I have no doubt that there will be substantial opportunities for British industry.

Mr. O'Neill: We welcome much that has come out of Geneva, but will the Secretary of State assure us that the views of Caspar Weinberger on this issue are representative of the Reagan Administration, because, in

other areas relating to Geneva, they were not representative? Secondly, will the right hon. Gentleman assure us of the Government's position in relation to what the Foreign Secretary said about star wars last March? In the absence of any debate or statement on star wars, what is the Government's position?

Mr. Heseltine: The Government's position is precisely as it was when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met the President of the United States at Camp David and made it clear that we believed that research into the programme was inevitable and that any further advance in the context of the programme would come within the ABM treaty. That remains our position.

Defence Establishments (Location)

10. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has reached any conclusions in his review of the geographical distribution of units and establishments.

Mr. Heseltine: For a variety of reasons the services are disproportionately located in southern England and, as the House will be aware, I want to see what can be done to redress the balance. A more even geographic spread would benefit the regions and is highly desirable on those grounds, but all proposals must stand on their economic and operational merits.

Mr. Fallon: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Is it not archaic that so many units and establishments are located in the south-east facing the Channel, where the threat appears to have diminished, rather than in the north-east, nearer the NATO flank that we are pledged to defend?

Mr. Heseltine: I thought that my hon. Friend was about to suggest that we should address the threat from Liverpool. I should tell him that the Ministry of Defence is carrying out further work on this important matter.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Opposition welcome the Secretary of State's statement that he wishes to move defence establishments from constituencies represented by Conservative Members, near Bath and in Hampshire and Sussex, to areas of high unemployment. I hope that we shall see some fruits of that desire. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that a defence establishment in my constituency was the first to be closed under the John Nott review. Will the right hon. Gentleman show his good will by keeping open factories and establishments in areas of high unemployment before he embarks on this exercise?

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman will realise that even I cannot keep open establishments that have long since been closed. All those factors will be carefully borne in mind, although I must introduce the caveat that the underlying commercial realities are bound to have a significant influence on our decision-making.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my right hon. Friend taking active steps to examine the scope for defence establishments to be located in the north-west?

Mr. Heseltine: We are considering how the decision-making process tended for many decades to concentrate facilities in the south. In that context, the location of some facilities in the north-west is bound to be on the agenda.

Dr. Richard Wagner

11. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet Richard Wagner, Special Assistant to the United States Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Heseltine: I have at present no plans to meet Dr. Wagner.

Mr. Caborn: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. Since Dr. Wagner alleges that the Secretary of State misled the House, will the right hon. Gentleman apologise and take this opportunity to explain to the House which new nuclear battlefield weapons will be used in future by our Army in Germany?

Mr. Heseltine: I have already made it clear to the House that I wholly reject the suggestion to which the hon. Gentleman drew attention, and I have made my views known to the United States Administration. The effects of SACEUR's proposals on the composition of our nuclear forces are being carefully considered. If I have any announcements to make, I shall make them in the House at the appropriate moment.

Mr. Ian Lloyd: My right hon. Friend has already mentioned his important discussions on the strategic defence initiative with the United States Defence Secretary. He will be aware that representations have been made, I believe to the Prime Minister and to others, by leading representatives of the computing community in Britain, suggesting that the important objectives of the SDI are completely incompatible with what is known of the potential of computing and software here and in the United States. He will also have seen the papers published at the weekend by Professor Parnass, who was a member of the SDI software team, stressing that the objective is unattainable. Since this is a matter of the utmost significance, will we have an opportunity to discuss it?

Mr. Heseltine: Whether the House has an opportunity to discuss this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House. I dare say that my hon. Friend's views have already got through to that most important decision-maker. The attainments of the computing industry are secondary to the fundamental point that research programmes have been started in the United States. Those research programmes are of interest to us, whether or not they obtain the objectives.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Opposition welcome what the Secretary of State said about Dr. Wagner's remarks. We also welcome the withdrawal of some battlefield nuclear weapons, but we are worried that, at the end of the day, we might have more powerful battlefield nuclear weapons in central Europe. Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that, before decisions are taken, the matter can be debated in the House? Part of the problem about remarks by Dr. Wagner and others is that the House does not debate such matters. Apart from any other consideration, such matters should be debated in the House before decisions are taken.

Mr. Heseltine: The House must think it extraordinary that a representative of a Government who modernised our independent nuclear deterrent by the Chevaline process without telling anyone that they had done it should expect us to subject modernisation programmes for nuclear weapons systems to debate in the House. It is unthinkable.

Nuclear Weapons (Road Accidents)

12. **Mr. Janner** askd the Secretary of State for Defence how many road accidents have occurred in the last year on roads in the United Kingdom which involved a vehicle carrying nuclear weapons.

Mr. Stanley: It has been the practice of successive Governments, for security reasons, not to comment on the methods of transporting nuclear weapons.

Mr. Janner: I am not asking about the methods of transportation. Why are the Government not prepared to give any information about accidents involving the transport of nuclear weapons, and in particular about the incident in Scotland on 20 June? Is the Minister aware that the results of the Ministry of Defence inquiry into that accident have not been made public and that there has been no inquiry whatever by the Strathclyde police?

Mr. Stanley: I should have thought it was obvious that if the Ministry of Defence gave details of accidents involving nuclear weapons it would be disclosing the methods of transportation.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Brinton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Brinton: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. Has she had time to note that the latest trade figures show a surplus of £400 million? Does not the hat trick of trade surplus, reducing inflation and increasing growth give the lie to opponents who say that my right hon. Friend's economic policy does not work?

The Prime Minister: Yes, and I thank my hon. Friend for pointing these things out so forcefully. This is the sixth year of balance of payments surplus. When one adds to that the optimistic CBI forecast yesterday and today, it augurs well for the future and for employment.

Mr. Cyril Smith: Will the Prime Minister find time in her busy day to acquaint herself with the widespread concern expressed by employers and trade unionists in the textile and clothing industry about the latest negotiations for the new multi-fibre arrangement? Does she appreciate that if the Government weaken their position in those negotiations and allow a flood of imports, the result will be even higher unemployment in areas where it is already well above average?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of that concern. A new multi-fibre arrangement is being negotiated. The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the possible knock-on effect on other industries and on export capacity. We have to take all those factors into account.

Mr. Key: Will my right hon. Friend take the earliest opportunity to convey to the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe the deep sense of shock and loss felt in this country at the murder last night of the headmaster of Tegwani school and his English-born wife Jean? Will she also convey our sympathy to the Methodist Missionary Society? Does my right hon. Friend agree that terrorism and murder, wherever they occur, are an affront to the whole of mankind?

The Prime Minister: I shall gladly convey my hon. Friend's message and reinforce it with the Government's message. I agree wholly that terrorism is the enemy of democracy and that we must try to defeat it wherever it occurs.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: Is the Prime Minister aware that the Conservative candidate in the Tyne Bridge constituency is on record as saying that the people of that area have been brainwashed into believing that they are deprived? Is that Government's policy and the view of the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps I may reply with some facts and figures. In 1985-86 the Manpower Services Commission will provide 25,000 places on the youth training scheme, 27,000 places on the community programme by April 1986, funding for more than 3,600 people on the enterprise allowance scheme in 1985-86 and training for some 13,000 adults in 1985-86, an increase of 82 per cent. over the previous year. Those are the facts. I leave the hon. Gentleman to make up his own mind.

Q2. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the failure of the Labour party in Liverpool to fix a rate for the past 10 months, its failure to observe the law, its use of a private army to intimidate those who oppose its views and the fact that it has displayed a monumental contempt for the democratic process, for the welfare of the citizens of that city and for the welfare of its 31,000 employees, shows that it would be a disaster for Britain if the Labour party were ever to be returned to national government with such members? Should not the Leader of the Opposition stop wringing his hands and denying their existence?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir.

Q3. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. McDonald: Is the Prime Minister aware that 415 pensioners have already died from cold this year? What will she do to stop that happening for the rest of the year?

The Prime Minister: The amount of money given for fuel allowance under the present Government greatly exceeds that given by any previous Government and greatly exceeds the increase in the price of fuel. It is an excellent record, and I commend it to the hon. Lady.

Q4. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howarth: As the teachers' strike continues to inflict damage on our schools, does my right hon. Friend agree that there can be no lasting improvement until parents are given more choice and a greater say in school policy, and until headmasters are accorded the role of managing director, answerable to their boards and with authority to run schools properly, as is suggested in a recent and excellent pamphlet entitled "No Turning Back" drawn up by me and some of my hon. Friends?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has been kind enough to send me a copy of his most excellent pamphlet. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has also read it and will digest its contents. I am sure also that my hon. Friend will welcome the Education Bill announced in the Gracious Speech, which proposes a strengthening of the parents' voice in the running of schools and clarification of the roles of governing bodies, head teachers and local education authorities. I share my hon. Friend's and parents' concern that, although they are paying full taxes and rates, children are not at the moment receiving the education to which they are entitled, because of the teachers' strike.

Mr. Kinnock: I thought that the Secretary of State for Education and Science might have been writing a response to the hon. Gentleman's pamplet "No Going Back" entitled "No Going Forward". *[Interruption.]* It is rubbish.

The Prime Minister met President Reagan last Thursday after his welcome meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev. We have asked her to make a statement to the House. Why has she not agreed to do so?

The Prime Minister: I gave a very full reply to a written question. It would be strange to make a statement on a summit that I did not attend.

Mr. Kinnock: I think I can say on behalf of the House and of people outside that that is not good enough as an answer. The matters raised in this first summit for many years are of vital interest to us all, and the Prime Minister's reflections on her meeting with President Reagan are naturally important. Why could she give a full press conference but not make herself available for proper questioning by hon. Members who represent the British people?

The Prime Minister: Immediately after we had the NATO meeting, I rightly gave a press conference. I do not think it right to give a statement to the House on a summit meeting which I did not attend and in regard to which I could therefore not reply fully. I had already put the statement issued from the summit in the Library of the House.

Mr. Kinnock: Why a press conference on a summit that the right hon. Lady did not attend, and no statement to the House for cross-questioning on a summit that she did not attend?

The Prime Minister: Because the press conference was given on the NATO meeting immediately after that meeting, not on the summit. The press conferences given by President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev and the official communiqué will give the right hon. Gentleman far more detail than anything that I could give.

Mr. Kinnock: Reagan is not the president of Britain.

The Prime Minister: Precisely. On that as on other things, there is "no turning back". The right hon. Gentleman got it wrong.

Q5. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Roe: In recognising our support for the Local Government Bill, which is now going into Committee, will my right hon. Friend confirm that it will help to stamp out abuses, such as that of the GLC spending more money on supporting anti-police groups in London than the Labour party spent nationally throughout its general election campaign in 1983?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, following the recommendations of the Widdicombe committee, the Bill is designed to prevent local government money from being spent on party political propaganda. That committee has a continuing remit. If it makes further recommendations, we shall follow them up with further legislation.

Q6. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Boyes: Does the Prime Minister recall that in a recent television interview she told how Alderman Roberts, in his final speech, said that in honour he had taken up the gown and in honour he laid it down, and then she shed a little tear? There is no criticism of that, but how many tears will the right hon. Lady shed for the 700 miners at Herrington colliery who in honour took up the pick and shovel and in honour laid them down?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that there is a full and proper procedure for the closure of collieries — they were closed under the previous Labour Government — and that procedure will be followed.

Mr. Dykes: Given the need for a far-reaching intergovernmental agreement this weekend in the EC, will my right hon. Friend assert that the Government will put their full weight behind developing a fundamental agreement that will really take the Community forward?

The Prime Minister: We are not aware of what will come out of the intergovernmental conference. If there are proposals for any treaty amendments, they will have to come before the House.

Mr. Foot: Is the effective cut in child benefit, which comes into operation this week, intended to be permanent, or temporary?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has heard the proposals for increases in social security which overall offer more than £2 billion. Child benefit has been increased substantially in recent years. For the future, the right hon. Gentleman must await further announcements.

Mr. Sumberg: Has my right hon. Friend noted the recent statement by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that the crime involving David Wilkie, which took place during the mining dispute, was not a crime? Will she condemn that disgraceful statement as an appalling example to our young people?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will understand when I say that that is a matter for the courts, not for the Government. What Opposition Members say about it must be judged by the British people rather than by the Government.

Q7. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hamilton: May I jolt the Prime Minister's conscience about the disastrous effects that her monetarist policies are having in Scotland and, in particular, in Lanarkshire? Is she aware that Scotland's steel industry is in a dreadful state and that there are to be 200 more redundancies at the Clydesdale works in my constituency? The men are already working short time, and those redundancies will add considerably to unemployment in Scotland. What does the right hon. Lady intend to do about it?

The Prime Minister: From the CBI survey and the figures, the hon. Gentleman will know that this year output is up for the fifth consecutive year. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that production capacity greatly exceeds orders for steel. There is no way in which we can continue to keep everything open in such circumstances. The previous Labour Government had to close some things, but held up many closures which should have taken place. This Government allocated £130 million in order to purchase quota to keep Ravenscraig open. That was this Government's earnest of good faith in the future of Ravenscraig.

Q8. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruinvels: As the Prime Minister of a country that abhors terrorism and all that it stands for, will my right hon. Friend explain why the Tanzanian terrorists who came to Stansted have been given an amnesty and are to be allowed to stay in this country for a year when they have served their terms of imprisonment?

Because of terrorist activity, is it possible to prevent airlines flying to Greece, where arms have been taken on to planes at Athens airport?

The Prime Minister: We must await the inquiry into the events at Athens airport before determining precisely where the fault lies and reaching any conclusion.

On my hon. Friend's point about the Tanzanian hijack in this country in 1982, those involved were tried in our courts, found guilty and given considerable prison sentences. Some of them are now out of prison. An undertaking given at the time has been interpreted as our saying that the terrorists would not be returned to Tanzania. They have been refused asylum in this country, but will be allowed to stay for 12 months.

Mr. McWilliam: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During Question Time I asked the Minister of State for Defence Procurement what assurances he had given Dennis Ferranti about the purchase of CNC lathes to manufacture mortar shells currently made by the royal ordnance factory on Tyneside. The Minister replied——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me. I cannot be responsible for what a Minister says.

Mr. McWilliam: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not asking you to be responsible for what the Minister said, but to rule whether it is in order for anyone to mislead the House. The Minister said——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time. There is a major debate ahead of us. I cannot be responsible for answers given from the Front Benches, any more than I can be responsible for the questions asked.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during Question Time the shadow Secretary of State for Defence made a statement to the House——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Dickens: If I am upsetting you, Mr. Speaker, I will let it go.

Mr. McWilliam: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I cannot deal with his point of order because the matter that he raises is not my responsibility. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. McWilliam: Is it in order for an hon. Member to ask another hon. Member to write to him about a subject on which he has already written to him and to which he has already replied?

Mr. Speaker: I think that the answer is yes.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (Schedule 4) (Amendment) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Agricultural Holdings (Fee) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Agricultural Holdings Act 1948 (Variation of Fourth Schedule) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Asbestos Products (Safety) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the important debate on the Anglo-Irish agreement. I have not selected either of the amendments on the Order Paper.

3.33 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Anglo-Irish Agreement (Cmnd. 9657) signed on 15th November by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald.

Since 1969, nearly 2,500 people have lost their lives in Northern Ireland as a result of terrorism, more than 750 of them members of the security forces. As the House is only too well aware, there has also been further loss of life among the armed forces, police and civilians in the remainder of the United Kingdom, including three of our colleagues in this House.

That is the stark background to today's debate and it takes us immediately to the historic divisions between the two communities in Northern Ireland, which we cannot ignore.

Whatever the differences that may emerge in our debate, I believe that we shall all be united in our determination to end the violence and to bring to justice those who are guilty. We shall all be united in our deep sympathy for the thousands of families whose lives have been darkened by the shadow of the gunman and the bomber; and we shall all be united in our admiration and gratitude for the men and women of the security forces in Northern Ireland and, indeed, from all parts of Great Britain, so many of whom have paid the price of protecting us with their own lives.

But it is apparent that any initiative, however modest, to bring the people of Northern Ireland closer together to beat the terrorists raises emotions and fears rooted deep in the past. I understand those fears, although I do not believe them to be justified.

Faced with all that we have seen in the past 16 years, it was not enough for the Government to rely solely upon the security forces, valiant though they are, to contain and resist the tide of violence. Let me make it clear that there can be no such thing as an acceptable level of violence, whether in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The Government owe a duty to the security forces and to all the law-abiding people of Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic alike, to do everything within their power to stamp out terrorism — not by giving in to the terrorist, not by giving him a single inch. Indeed, the fact that the terrorists have condemned the agreement is a demonstration that we have done no such thing.

The fight against terrorism is greatly weakened if the community is divided against itself, and it is greatly strengthened if all people committed to democracy and the rule of law can join together against the men of violence. That, the Government felt, required a further attempt to reconcile the two communities in Northern Ireland.

The Unionist community, firmly loyal to the Crown and to the United Kingdom, represent a proud tradition of devotion to the Union which everyone in these islands should respect, and which this agreement does respect. They have a right to feel secure about Northern Ireland's position as part of the United Kingdom. This agreement, by reinforcing the principle of consent, should make them feel more secure, not only today but in the future. Unionists have the assurance that neither an Irish Government, nor of course a British Government, will try to impose new constitutional arrangements upon them against their will.

The nationalist community think of themselves as Irish in terms of their identity, their social and cultural traditions and their political aspirations. The House can respect their identity too and acknowledge their aspirations, even though we may not see the prospect of their fulfilment.

The only lasting way to put an end to the violence and achieve the peace and stability in Northern Ireland is reconciliations between these two communities. That is the goal of this agreement.

I now draw the attention of the House to what I consider to be the most significant points of the agreement. The preamble sets out the commitment of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic to work for reconciliation; our utter and total rejection of violence; our recognition and respect for the separate identities in Northern Ireland; and our acceptance of the right of each to pursue its aspirations by peaceful means. These principles reflect the hopes of both communities.

Article 1 of the agreement makes it abundantly clear that there is no threat whatsoever to Unionists' heartfelt desire to remain part of the United Kingdom. It provides, in a formally binding international accord, a recognition by the Irish Government that the status of Northern Ireland will remain unchanged as long as that is the wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. It recognises also that the present wish of a majority is for no change in that status. There can be no better reply to the fears that have been expressed in the House than this explicit recognition of the legitimacy of the Unionist position.

Article 2 of the agreement acknowledges in a practical and strictly defined way the concern that the Irish Republic has with matters relating to Northern Ireland. In the past, that concern has sometimes been expressed in critical or negative terms which did not help the cause of harmony between the communities in Northern Ireland. Article 2, therefore, establishes an Intergovernmental Conference. This will have no executive authority either now or in the future. It will consider on a regular basis political, security and legal matters, including the administration of justice, as well as cross-border co-operation on security, economic and cultural matters.

This co-operation will not be a one-way street. The Irish Government will be able to put forward views and proposals on certain matters affecting Northern Ireland. We for our part shall be able to pursue issues of concern to all peace-loving people in Northern Ireland. Notably co-operation in the fight against terrorism — co-operation which goes beyond the borders of Northern Ireland. The matters within the scope of the conference are spelled out in greater detail in articles 4 to 9 of the agreement. I should like to draw the House's attention to three particular points about these articles. First, if devolution is restored, those matters that become the responsibility of the devolved Government will no longer be within the purview of the intergovernmental conference. We hope that the agreement will encourage the constitutional representatives of both communities to come together to form a local administration acceptable to both. This hope has been specifically endorsed by the Irish Government. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern

Ireland will be exploring with the constitutional parties how best to make progress. Meantime, the Assembly continues in being, with all its statutory responsibilities.

Secondly, article 8, which deals with legal matters, says that consideration will be given to the possibility of establishing mixed courts. Let me say straightaway that we have absolute confidence in the judiciary in Northern Ireland. Indeed, the integrity and courage which they have shown in recent years in maintaining high standards of judicial impartiality have been outstanding.

We know the difficulties which would be involved in mixed courts both in Northern Ireland and in the republic. We recognise the reservations which are held by the legal profession. We see no easy or early way through these difficulties. That is why, although we are prepared to consider in good faith the possibility of them at some future time, we have made it clear that we are under no commitment to introduce them.

Thirdly, I draw the House's attention to the proposals for improved security co-operation in article 9. This provides for a programme of work to be undertaken by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Garda to improve co-operation in such matters as threat assessment, exchange of information, technical co-operation, training of personnel and operational resources.

The really vital element in this programme is fuller and faster exchange of information, especially pre-emptive intelligence which helps to prevent acts of terrorism.

These are specific measures which I believe will lead to real improvements in security—improvements which will be welcome above all to those men and women who live in the border areas and who have been subjected to so many merciless attacks designed to drive them from their homes and farms.

That improvement should be further reinforced by the Irish Government's intention to accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism.

The convention's purpose is to ensure that those who commit terrorist offences should be brought to justice and that any offences involving the use of explosives or firearms should not be regarded as political.

Irish accession should greatly increase our prospects of securing extradition from the republic of persons accused or convicted or terrorist crimes. This will be a major and a welcome step forward in the war against terrorism.

I draw the House's attention to the reference in article 12 to the possible establishment of an Anglo-Irish interparliamentary body. Both we and the Irish Government felt that this was a matter for our Parliaments themselves rather than for Governments to pursue. I hope that contacts will be established through the usual channels to consider how discussions on an interparliamentary body can most effectively be taken forward.

I have tried to explain to the House the most significant points of the agreement. In view of some of the mistaken claims about it, I want also to say something about what is not in the agreement. The agreement does not affect the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. It does not set us on some imagined slippery slope to Irish unity, and it is nonsense to claim that it might.

The effect of article 1 is to confirm the provision in section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom as long as a majority there so wish. That again is a recognition of reality. The guarantee for the majority lies in the fact that it is a majority. That fundamental point is reinforced by this agreement.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I have listened carefully to the right hon. Lady. Can she explain why the Irish Government signed the agreement?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Irish Government signed the agreement because they share with us its objectives: to try to defeat the men of violence and to try to achieve peace and stability for all the people who live, and who will continue to live, in Northern Ireland. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to read it, all of this is set out fully in the preamble to the agreement.

Second, I want to make it clear that the agreement does not detract from British sovereignty in Northern Ireland —or, for that matter, from Irish sovereignty in the republic. We, the United Kingdom Government, accountable to Parliament, remain responsible for the government of Northern Ireland. Yes, we will listen to the views of the Irish Government. Yes, we will make determined efforts to resolve differences. But at the end of the day decisions north of the border will continue to be made by the United Kingdom Government and south of the border by the Irish Government. This is a fundamental point. There can be no misunderstanding.

Third, I want to dispel the absurd notion that the Government will listen to the views of the republic on Northern Ireland matters, but not to the views of our own unionist community.

There are already many ways in which the majority community in Northern Ireland can and do put their views to the Government. The right hon. and hon. Members of this House who represent the unionist parties are themselves an important channel. Another is the Northern Ireland Assembly, an important and experienced body which could be used to improve the arrangements for consultation. Yet another is the many representations that unionists make to Ministers. The unionist voice is clearly heard and will continue to be heard.

If the Anglo-Irish agreement is to bring about a real improvement in the daily lives of the two communities in Northern Ireland, it must be matched by a determined effort on the part of all law-abiding citizens to defeat the men of violence. And that effort must rest on clear and consistent principles of justice, equity and fairness. For if democracy is the rule of the majority, the other side of the coin is fairness and respect for the minority, for all are citizens of the United Kingdom.

On the economic front, we will continue to pay special attention to Northern Ireland's needs. During direct rule, spending on economic and social programmes has risen since 1972-73 by 50 per cent. in real terms to £3,600 million last year. That amounts to nearly £2,500 a head, far more than in any other part of the United Kingdom. Spending on that scale shows the high priority given by successive Governments to the needs of Northern Ireland and its people. Our concern will continue.

On security, our efforts will also continue. Thanks to the magnificent work of our policemen and soldiers, we have already made some progress, but we still have much to do. I believe that our security forces can take new heart from the promise of greater security co-operation that will flow from the agreement.

In commending this agreement to the House, I should like first to pay tribute to Dr. Fitzgerald, who has worked

[The Prime Minister]

honestly and sincerely for an agreement to bring reassurance to both communities and a real prospect of peace and stability.

Second, I say to the members of both communities in Northern Ireland that, if Parliament approves the agreement, the Government will steadfastly implement it. This House represents all the people of the United Kingdom and its decisions are binding on all of them. We shall not give way to threats or to violence from any quarter. We shall look to the co-operation of all men and women of good will who want a better future for Northern Ireland and for their families.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the point about the accountability of Parliament, will she say whether there will be any opportunity for Parliament to know about the deliberations of the Anglo-Irish conference? Will its deliberations be made public anywhere, or debated?

The Prime Minister: It is not expected that everything that is said in the intergovernmental conference will be made public. I am giving consideration to how we can report to the House, for obvious reasons. We attend many intergovernmental conferences in Europe and elsewhere and usually report to the House about those that we attend. I am giving urgent consideration to this matter because I realise that there is concern about it.

Finally, I address myself once more to those among the unionist community who have openly expressed their fears and worries about this agreement. Far from representing any threat to the union of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, the agreement reinforces the union, and that should bring reassurance and confidence to the unionist majority. It clearly recognises—as it should—the validity of their great tradition, and it holds out the prospect of greater success in the struggle against terrorism from which the majority have suffered so much. As one who believes in the union, I urge the unionists to take advantage of the chance offered by the agreement.

We embarked on this agreement because we were not prepared to see the two communities for ever locked into the tragedies and antagonisms of the past. The younger generation, above all, has a right to expect more than that. The price of new hope is persistent endeavour. That is what we ask, and ask equally of all.

3.52 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Today, as at all times when we discuss the affairs of Northern Ireland both inside and outside the House, we do so against a background of tragedy and atrocity. We think of those who have lost their lives, as the Prime Minister said, and we think of their loved ones and those whose lives have been devastated by sectarian killings and attacks. We remember those families who, when they felt the forces of violence, no matter what the status of those killed—soldiers, policemen, adults, relations or children — have always ended with a despairing question—"Why did it happen to us?" Many hon. Members have heard that question from grieving relations much too often, and, tragically those who represent Northern Ireland seats have heard it more often than the rest of us.

As we debate the accord, we remember too the courage and the fortitude of those who have lived and worked with and within the tortured community of Northern Ireland. We know that the problem of Northern Ireland, plainly, has spilled across the water and scarred Britain. We acknowledge the debt that we owe, both on the mainland and in Northern Ireland, to the civil servants, the police, Members of the House and so many ordinary men and women in Northern Ireland who have been willing to help in the search for peace and a way out of the sterile sectarian divisions.

As we think of these things, we have to remind ourselves yet again that there are matters other than security that are of importance to the people of Northern Ireland, and that there are issues worthy of report and debate other than the constant plague of conflict.

We are sometimes told that there is no solution to the historic problems of Northern Ireland, but, however difficult it may be, and however long it may take, we must never give up the search for a solution. That would be defeatism paid for in blood. If we give up the search for peace, we say to the people of Northern Ireland, "Your agony must endure for ever". In all conscience, we cannot and must not do that.

This House has a special duty to recall that the problems of Northern Ireland are a matter not just for the Province or for the Republic but, most definitely, for Britain as well. In addition to the tragedies and their irreparable costs, there is the price of conflict which the New Ireland Forum research team has reasonably estimated to be over £9,000 million between 1969 and 1982 and a further £1,500 million or so a year with the addition of the £120 million or so a year that we spend out of public coffers in maintaining the armed forces in Northern Ireland. It is not fitting for this House remorselessly to consign such sums to Northern Ireland without at least being able to demonstrate to the people of Wales, Scotland and England that we deliberately pursue all means of achieving an end to the conflict and the massive costs that go with it.

We must also recognise that many of the legislative and other changes that have come about as a result of our inability to find a political solution in Northern Ireland disfigure the democracy of our entire country. Courts without juries, strip searches in prisons, internment without trial and many other things can be said to have arisen from the circumstances of their time, but no democracy can or should bear such changes lightly or for long, because if it does it puts at risk the very liberty that it seeks to defend.

For all those reasons, the Opposition will do whatever they can to promote the chances of peace, and the prosperity that depends on that peace, in Northern Ireland.

The status quo offers absolutely no solution to anyone at all. For that reason, we shall approve the Anglo-Irish agreement, which for reasons of accuracy and not affectation I wish had been called the British-Irish agreement.

The agreement is clearly a development from the New Ireland Forum set up in Dublin in 1983. That was a bold and visionary step taken by the major political parties in the Republic, together with the Social Democratic and Labour party. I pay tribute to those parties and their leaders, one of whom we are fortunate enough to have in this House. None of those leaders has given up his legitimate commitment to constitutional nationalism or his commitment to the reunification of Ireland. They have recognised that, just as they cannot be forced to relinquish their aspirations of getting rid of the border, neither can

the unionists be forced to relinquish their desire to keep that border between the north and the south. The constitutional nationalists have decided that, while retaining their historic ambition of unity, they will now give pre-eminence to reconciliation and a formal and binding acknowledgement of the fact that they have long recognised—that unification cannot be achieved without consent.

In the Dail last Tuesday, the Taoiseach, Dr. FitzGerald, said:

"No sane person would wish to attempt to change the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority of its people. That would be a recipe for disaster and could, I believe, lead only to a civil war that would be destructive of the life of people throughout our island."

As well as speaking for the Irish people, Dr. FitzGerald recorded the sentiments of all the British people.

That is the reward that the gunmen got for their violence. They have engendered such revulsion against insecurity, fear and brutality that they have made nationalists seek change even at the cost of indefinitely postponing their own nationalist aspirations.

The terrorists can and will treat the matter with complete cynicism. They will undoubtedly deride the action of the Irish Government and Irish political parties, and they will rely on their sworn enemies in the unionist groupings to erode and erase the agreement. No doubt that is what the Provisional IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army seek. Since they know that the most critical test of the credibility and acceptability of the agreement is its effect on security in Northern Ireland, they will continue with their terrorism and the noxious insincerity of their bullet and ballot strategy to sustain insecurity throughout the Province and in the Republic. Those terrorists, like every hon. Member, must know that the success of the agreement will be difficult to build and prove, but that its failure will be easy to contrive.

The gunmen alone cannot make the agreement fail. That outcome would need the most unholy, unsigned, unspoken alliance with those whom they most despise. Will that alliance be forged? Some hon. Members can make a major contribution to providing the answer to that. They do not belong to the Government or a future Government. They are not men of violence, and not even people who tolerate violence—to their eternal credit. They belong to the unionist parties of Northern Ireland. I recognise their fears, I know that they feel beleaguered, and excluded from designing their own destiny, that they live in constant anxiety about a sell-out, and that any failure by a British Government to explain their intentions heightens those feelings of fear. I know that they feel that deals have been done behind their back, and some will feel deep and genuine resentment at that. However modest the agreement, and however cautious and conditional the change, those feelings run deep, and in many quarters of the unionist community those feelings are absolutely genuine.

However, I cannot help thinking that there is a minority in the unionist community who quite enjoy the opportunity that is afforded by anxiety, and who will mobilise fear and bigotry in Northern Ireland. Zephaniah Williams, the Welsh Chartist, said:

"When prejudice blinds the eye of the mind the brightest truth shines in vain."

I do not address the bigots or the wallies on either side of the sectarian divide, when I plead with the majority of non-nationalists not to be blinded by prejudice. I ask them to see that the sole beneficiaries of a breakdown would be the terrorists, that the objectives of the constitutional nationalists for the foreseeable future are limited to reconciliation and stability, and to see their acceptance of consent as the absolute precondition of any change. I ask them to see that the common cause of peace is a greater cause than the preservation of this miserable murderous status quo, and that in the agreement there is no loss of sovereignty by either Government or Parliament — certainly nothing that can begin to compare with the concessions of sovereignty that come as a natural consequence of our membership of the European Community.

I also plead with the non-nationalists to see that, if sovereignty is to be meaningful, it must involve the power to live effectively in peace under the law. Sovereignty cannot be an expression of vanity that covers the inability to rule with those conditions, like clothing on a skeleton. I ask them to see that the role of the Irish Government is consultative, and no more, that even that role can be transferred by progress with devolution, and that the basic reason for the involvement of the Irish Government, even in this capacity, is to be found in the refusal or inability of constitutional Northern Ireland unionists and constitutional Northern Ireland nationalists to share power, despite the opportunities afforded to them to do so.

I plead with them to see that the feelings of slight and suspicion, which are manifested, do not overwhelm them and leave them isolated as unionists from all those people, north and south of the border and on both sides of the water, who want to use their common longing for peace as the means of defeating violence. I ask them to recognise that the motives that led the constitutional nationalists, south and north of the border, to make the agreement are a convincing mixture of material self-interest and moral duty, not a cunning strategem for unification by stealth with the agreement of the British Prime Minister. That is the truth about the agreement.

The Irish state suffers from the contagion of violence — arms, robberies, killings, casualties, the waste of resources and the degeneration of its whole society which comes from a climate of conflict. The Republic cannot and does not want to afford that constant drain on its meagre fortunes, or the risk from it to the fabric of its society. Those are some of the pressing realities that brought Garret FitzGerald, Dick Spring and their colleagues first to the Forum and then to the agreement.

The other motivation, which is less tangible but no less forceful, of those men, whom I am happy to count among my friends, is their moral obligation towards the communities of Northern Ireland — the nationalist community, which is alienated and prey to either the temptations or the intimidation of terrorism, and the unionist community which is impaled, like its neighbours, on insecurity and estrangement.

The suspicious will understandably ask what is in the agreement for FitzGerald's Fine Gael, Spring's Irish Labour party and Hume's SDLP. There are three things that are in it for them. First, there is the possibility of promoting reconciliation. Secondly, there is the practical demonstration that they are trying to fulfil their moral obligations to the whole of Ireland—the Ireland that they love with a special passion. Thirdly, there is the chance of combating the terrorists by intensified joint security measures, and by achieving extra credibility

[Mr. Neil Kinnock]

within Northern Ireland for constitutional nationalism to throw back the tide of terrorist nationalism that comes with various pretences.

All those people and parties take great risks, and bring great credit on themselves. They are earnestly trying, against all the odds piled up by history, to put the purpose of securing peace above the easier course of indulging prejudice and courting popularity. Some people in every land are paralysed by history. Others are provoked by it, and they are such people. They have decided to try to be makers of history, rather than observers of it. They took that decision in modesty and responsibility, not in vanity or ambition. They want the history of conflict and waste to be changed to a future of conciliation. They are certainly Irish nationalists, but they are front-door agents for peace, not back-door fixers of unification. Unlike many others, they have decided to be part of the answer, rather than part of the problem. For that, my colleagues and I will support them in their aims and the practical application of them.

In doing so, I wish to acknowledge the contribution made by the Prime Minister to the agreement. I do not underestimate the effort that she has made, and I say without any taunt that it has involved a significant and welcome adjustment in her position during the past six years. I say further that the change is all the more credible because those six years have not only been marked by the continuing pressures of tragedy that come from Northern Ireland; they have also for her been punctuated by personal losses with the killing of Airey Neave and with the death and destruction of the Brighton bombing. I recognise her contribution freely, and I recognise it fully.

It is not, therefore, in any spirit of recrimination that I put this consideration to the right hon. Lady. The cause of this agreement would have been better served if she had taken the advice of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) last year when they asked her to try to spell out to the unionist communities what her intentions were in developing the relationships with the Dublin Government. That might not have assuaged all fears, it might not have silenced all the shouts, but it would have been evidence of trust and consultation which could have provided an essential credential for the agreement now.

I have to say, too, that the right hon. Lady's response to the report of the New Ireland Forum was, as I said at the time, precipitate and peremptory. Subsequent events, including the signature of the Hillsborough agreement, have demonstrated that. My party was the only party in Britain which gave the Forum the interest which it deserved, although I acknowledge the contribution made by a section of the unionist community in providing a coherent and cogent alternative review and set of proposals. That provided an opportunity for an informed debate, but unfortunately that debate was killed before it got started. But had we proceeded along those lines the atmosphere of accord may have been more literal and the atmosphere in which the agreement has been made may have been more propitious.

We gave evidence to the Forum on 19 January 1984. We said then that the way forward lay in the joint British-Irish initiative that could not easily be vetoed by either side of the entrenched communities of the North. We are glad that the agreement recognises that. We further suggested major innovative attempts to cross-border co-operation which could lead to the closer operation of the economic and social policies of the North and South. That is also recognised in the agreement.

We suggested ways of creating links between the criminal justice system in the North and in the South and we note that the Government are at least going to consider such links at meetings of the intergovernmental conference. We endorsed the view of the report that the crisis in Northern Ireland and the relationship between Britain and Ireland required new structures that could accommodate the rights of unionists to effective political, symbolic and administrative expression of their identity, their ethos and their way of life, and the rights of nationalists to effective political, symbolic and administrative expression of their identity. The agreement establishes and defines such structural change and the accommodation of rights, and we welcome that.

That is all to the good, and I draw attention to these matters simply to show that there has been for some time a course which could have been navigated, as we recommended, in a different way and at a different speed, which might have made the circumstances of this agreement more propitious.

In addition to the matters of consultation with unionists and recognition of the validity of the report from constitutional nationalists, there is another point that I must put to the Prime Minister. It is not in any way retrospective and it has a direct bearing on the conduct of affairs and the potential of the agreement. It concerns the economic condition of Northern Ireland. As everyone knows only too well, Northern Ireland is a poverty-stricken place. It has the lowest male wages, the highest shop prices and the highest energy charges of any economic region in the United Kingdom.

The poverty is manifested in many ways, not least the high morbidity and hospital admission rates. It is also manifested among the young in the fact that a high proportion of them leave school without any form of qualification. Most of all, Northern Ireland has a 21·4 per cent. unemployment rate, and that has increased from 9·7 per cent. in 1979. Those rates do not respect religious or political demarcations. In Craigavon and Armagh, unemployment is more than 20 per cent. In Coleraine and Enniskillen, it is more than 25 per cent. In Dungannon, Derry and Magherafelt, it is more than 28 per cent. In Newry, it is 32 per cent. In Cookstown and Strabane, 35 per cent. of the registered workers are unemployed.

Against that background, it is obvious that the agreement between Governments for the purpose of promoting common objectives of reconciliation is a fine thing and the effort at popular consent is a creditable activity. But both need a crucial further element—the prospect, at the very least, of economic development and security.

In addition to the usual arguments for fighting unemployment and sponsoring recovery, Northern Ireland has its own special and unenviable case. It is that violence cannot be excused by poverty, idleness or unemployment, but it clearly cannot be said to be unconnected with those evils. Violence, support for violence, toleration of violence may come from political fanaticism or plain gangsterism, but it can thrive on the scale of Northern Ireland only in conditions of economic insecurity and the

alienation which that breeds. *[Interruption.]* I am telling the truth. I know that the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) is never very keen on that.

Therefore, I say to the Prime Minister that it is essential in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, for her to adopt new policies of expansion and employment in order to stimulate recovery, to increase opportunity and to generate jobs. *[Interruption.]* Those hon. Members who are groaning now must answer the question: Do they think that an increase in employment, a reduction in unemployment and the generating of prosperity in that community would have the effect of increasing or decreasing the alienation in that community? Common sense of today, not some imagined history of which the hon. Gentleman speaks, tells us that such alienation, especially among the young, is rooted in the poverty, ugliness and strife that comes out of continual levels of economic deprivation.

We want that kind of economic development and recovery for the United Kingdom and will continue to work for it. Meanwhile, in Ireland, steps could be taken through the provisions and procedures of the Hillsborough accord, to promote the possibilities of economic development. Transport and tourism, as the Secretary of State and, indeed, his predecessors have previously recognised, have obvious possibilities for joint economic strategies, and so, too, does energy, as we have heard from many Northern Ireland Members.

What an absurdity it is that Britain can exchange electricity supplies with continental Europe but that Northern Ireland and the Republic cannot. Why do the Government refuse to put money into the Kinsale gas link when it appears that they are going to accept EEC and even American money for projects? What proposals will the Government make for bringing the agricultural systems of North and South together so that the whole island can secure the advantages that would accompany that? Will the Government make proposals to fill the surplus college places in Northern Ireland with the students who encounter a shortage of places in the Republic?

Those are areas of action which can all give life to the words of the accord and meaning to the work of the Intergovernmental Conference. But the most useful source of reassurance and stability — I repeat it in order to emphasise it — would come from the promotion of economic recovery, deliberately and systematically by Her Majesty's Government.

There are other areas, of course, in which the Government could work in order to mobilise support for the accord. We expect the Government to take deliberate steps to go beyond the current strategy of sending out letters and circulars in order to ensure clear understanding among the unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland of the nature, purpose, potential and limitations of the agreement.

Exaggeration, either of hopes or fears, will be of no practical help to anyone. That will not impress the bullies or the bigots on either side of the sectarian divide. In any case, they are beyond communication. That still leaves a huge majority in both communities to be talked with and not talked at. There are opportunities for Parliament to communicate with the majorities in both communities, too.

We note that the Intergovernmental Conference shall be a vehicle through which initiatives regarding the well-being of Northern Ireland are being channelled. However, that should not obviate the role of the United Kingdom Parliament also to come forward with its own initiatives — for instance, the initiative to put into effect the recommendations of the Baker report which was debated in the House last year concerning the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. In addition, we need not wait upon the Intergovernmental Conference before demanding a review of the procedures for strip searching at Armagh prison, to get prompt action on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and secure an early repeal of the Flags and Emblems (Display) Act 1954 that has long been sought by the Opposition. [HON. MEMBERS: "Too long."] Conservative Members should be acquainted with the fact that too many people in Northern Ireland say with justification that democracy is what happens in Westminster after 10.30 pm. When we have the opportunity for a two-day debate on those matters, they can expect the debate to be exhaustive and comprehensive, covering matters that concern our fellow citizens in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): We are exhausted now.

Mr. Kinnock: The hon. Gentleman should go to bed earlier.

The agreement of Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Republic of Ireland to give appropriate support to the development of a British-Irish interparliamentary body is worthy of further consideration, and we shall be seeking additional details from Ministers. In that area and in many others, there are obvious obligations for everyone in the House to demonstrate interest and commitment in communicating the opportunities that can arise from the agreement.

As a matter of policy and of commitment, the Labour party wants to see Ireland united by consent, and we are committed to working actively to secure that consent. However, that is not the reason for our action in approving the Hillsborough accord. We recognise that the priority is reconciliation in the communities of Northern Ireland and between the communities of Northern Ireland. It is that objective which brings our agreement.

I do not honestly know whether at some time in the future unity will come out of that reconciliation. That can be determined only by a majority which, in future decades, will probably have different components, be in different conditions and have different leadership. However, that peace will come only out of reconciliation and the normality and confidence that reconciliation brings. Further, any unity or development towards community between north and south will come only out of that peace. As an effort for that reconciliation and for that peace, the Labour party approves the agreement.

4.23 pm

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Since my departure from the Government 10 days ago I have made no public statement or comment. I wanted first to explain to the House the reasons for that departure.

My first encounter with Northern Ireland took place nearly 30 years ago. As a young subaltern I was stationed at Omagh in county Tyrone. It has been my good fortune to return to Ulster on many occasions since then, first as a soldier and then as a Member of this place. I have been proud to count unionist Members of this House as my friends.

[Mr. Ian Gow]

It is nearly seven years since I spoke in a debate on Northern Ireland, from the Opposition Front Bench, with Airey Neave at my side. I speak today to show that it is not necessary to have a big mouth or a loud voice to care deeply about Ulster. I speak, too, as one who condemns violence in all its forms. I speak as a unionist who repudiates today and who will repudiate tomorrow, every kind — I repeat, every kind — of unlawful or unconstitutional action. Unlike others I do not impugn the motives of Her Majesty's Government. In particular, I do not doubt for one moment the sincerity and the sense of honour of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Those who fashioned the Anglo-Irish agreement, principally my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, said to themselves, "We are faced with a continuing tragedy in Northern Ireland." I say in passing that I regret that no Foreign Office Minister is taking part in the debate. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary also said to themselves, "Lives are being lost, innocent people are being maimed and injured, property is being destroyed, unemployment is higher and investment lower in Ulster than in any part of the kingdom. We must try to abate those evils. Things cannot go on as they are. We must make a new initiative. We must do something about Ulster."

For years, successive Governments and successive Secretaries of State have told the House that a particular initiative could not be pursued in Northern Ireland because it would be unacceptable to the minority. Note that in this part of the United Kingdom the Government take pride, in my view rightly, in pursuing policies that they believe have the support of the majority despite the objections of a minority.

However, I will be told that Northern Ireland is different from England. I will be told that in Northern Ireland one cannot proceed save with the broad assent of the minority. I do not necessarily subscribe to that argument but if it is valid, how is it possible to proceed now with a policy that may be broadly acceptable to a minority but that is totally unacceptable to the overwhelming majority, among whom is a significant number of Catholic unionists?

The Government believe that the majority ought to be well satisfied with the agreement and profess some surprise that it is not. Conor Cruise O'Brien puts it well in *The Times* today. He writes:

"But the political impact will not be determined by . . . theories about how people ought to feel, but by how people actually do feel. And the feeling, on both sides . . . is that the Catholics have won a significant step in the direction of a united Ireland."

In round figures, as the House knows, there are 1 million Protestants and half a million Roman Catholics in Ulster, but it is a grave over-simplification to equate religion with political allegiance. I do not ask the House to accept my word for that. It is not only my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) who is testimony to that truth. In the past few days I have received letters from Roman Catholic unionists who endorse that view. I have been authorised to quote from one. A doctor now working in Liverpool writes:

"As an Ulsterman—and incidentally a Catholic—who has always voted Conservative (and Ulster Unionist before I came to England) I can only say that I am absolutely appalled by the terms and implications of the Anglo-Irish agreement which gives a foreign Government a say in the affairs of a part of the United Kingdom. There is not a shadow of doubt that the status of Northern Ireland has been changed without the consent of the majority of its people".

Nor is it only the so-called Protestant bigots — and there are Protestant bigots in Northern Ireland — who oppose the agreement. Again, with the authority of the writer of the letter, I wish to quote. I do so not because I need to rely on others to support the views that I hold, but because the views of decent people from Northern Ireland are tragically misunderstood or simply unknown in the House. This is the letter that I have been authorised to read:

"I am now living quietly in a bungalow with my two sisters . . . We are the ordinary 'silent' Unionists of Northern Ireland. Our days are filled with caring for our families and homes, and we do not have the time, or the inclination, to demonstrate at protest marches, or wave banners, or gather at meetings of hate. But we are British. And we are also bewildered, and hurt, and angry. How do we, the silent majority, effectively express our hurt and fear and protest at what is being done to us? Our politicians hurl abuse and anger, but I do not think that they gain sympathy that way. The ordinary quiet-living British people of Northern Ireland are totally united in their opposition to the Hillsborough agreement, and in their desire to remain British without condition, but can you tell me, please, if there is any possible way we can convey our wishes to those who are in Government over us and at the same time to gain understanding and support from the other citizens of the United Kingdom? I feel that the lack of understanding from those who do not live here, together with the feeling of helplessness at not knowing how to gain that understanding, is the hardest part to bear."

I have done as my correspondent asked. I have brought her fears to the attention of my right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench. However, I want to repeat her crucial words:

"the lack of understanding from those who do not live here . . . is the hardest part to bear."

For many Members of the House, Northern Ireland is a faraway country of which we know little. Indeed, it may be that more Members of the House have visited the Republic than have visited Ulster. I hope that in the coming months more hon. Members will be able to visit the Province, not just to listen to soldiers and members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, heroic though they are, but to listen to the views of ordinary people who often are equally heroic.

Following the signing of the agreement at Hillsborough on 15 November, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that she was a unionist and a loyalist. I shall never question her sincerity, but I have to say to my right hon. Friend that those words were received with incredulity by unionists in Northern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish agreement has been signed without understanding of the views of the overwhelming majority of the people of Northern Ireland. It has been signed against a background that gives wholly disproportionate consideration to the views of the minority. Under the agreement, the Irish Government will put forward views and proposals on political, security and legal matters, including the administration of justice. The Government who will put forward their views and proposals relating to Northern Ireland are the same Government from whose territory murderous assaults have been made on the innocent in the Province and to whose territory the guilty have returned and found too often a safe haven.

Article 2 of the constitution of the Irish Republic lays claim to the territory of the whole of the island of Ireland. One might have thought at least that if the Republic's Government were to be allowed — and in the most

solemn terms of an international treaty—to put forward proposals relating to political, security and legal matters, they would have agreed to remove article 2 from their constitution. The British Government claim that it is a major step forward for the Government of the Republic to have given formal acceptance of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. If that is so, why was article 2 not removed?

We are told that the agreement will mean more effective co-operation on security matters between the Republic and the United Kingdom. Is it really suggested that without the agreement such co-operation would have been less effective? All civilised Governments, with or without a formal agreement, should commit themselves unreservedly to the elimination of terrorism. If the Government of the Republic have been unable hitherto to be as effective in combating terrorism as we were entitled to expect, why are we so confident that they will be able to deliver now?

The Intergovernmental Conference will be composed of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and a Republic Minister, who, in effect, will be the Minister for Northern Ireland affairs. The two Ministers will be the joint chairmen. The Republic Minister, even though he has only a consultative role, will be perceived to be the representative of the minority community. Thus, for the first time, a Minister from a foreign country will be representing at official level citizens of this kingdom. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred to the arrangement in her speech. That arrangement leaves unionists with no comparable status. That arrangement will be damaging, and incalculably damaging, for those who are asserting the principle that unionists and nationalists are fellow citizens. Instead of reconciliation there will be further division.

Our fellow countrymen from Northern Ireland will perceive—and will not be wrong in perceiving—that the agreement would never have been signed unless there had been a prolonged campaign of violence. The agreement will be perceived as having been won as a result of violence. The Irish National Liberation Army and the Irish Republican Army will believe that their violence is succeeding. The Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment will perceive that they have been betrayed.

The new agreement is being trumpeted in Dublin mainly because the Irish Government will be able, in the most solemn terms, to

"put forward views and proposals on matters relating to Northern Ireland".

When those views and proposals are submitted to the United Kingdom Government, they will be made known in Dublin. When those views and proposals are accepted by Her Majesty's Government, Ulster will feel that the views of a foreign power are being given greater weight than the views of the majority in Northern Ireland. The Intergovernmental Conference will not be able to receive the views of the majority. The views of the minority will be expressed, not by the minority itself, but by the Government of a foreign power.

No Member of the House should criticise the agreement without putting forward an alternative policy. I remember the words of our manifesto at the 1979 general election. They were words in which I had a hand. The manifesto said:

"In the absence of devolved government we will seek to establish one or more elected regional councils with a wide range of powers over local services."

Alas, following the assassination of Airey Neave, that policy was never implemented. It may be that he was assassinated because that was his policy. Successive Secretaries of State have abandoned that policy. Six years on, although there is still an absence of devolved government, there is still no

"one or more elected regional councils".

I approved of the policy set out in the 1979 manifesto.

I approved, too, of the words of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at a meeting organised by the Ulster Unionist Council in Belfast on 19 June 1978, when she said of the Conservative and Unionist party and the Ulster Unionist party:

"Our two parties share one overriding common purpose: the maintenance and strengthening of the union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. we shall not consider any plans for the political future of this part of the United Kingdom which could result in the weakening of the union."

To my deep regret, the Anglo-Irish agreement is inconsistent with those words.

The Government assert, and continue to assert,

"that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench to understand that, with this agreement, the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland believe that there has been a change in status. I must tell the House that frankly, so do I.

We should implement the policy laid down in the 1979 manifesto. We should assert that those in Northern Ireland who aspire to a united Ireland will be respected. We should assert that Ulster Unionists are ready to achnowledge the place in Ulster of the Roman Catholic, whether unionist of republican, as in any other part of the kingdom, and that all men and women should be entitled to express their views, opinions and identities under a rule of law which would safeguard their rights. We should assert that the policy of the Government is to maintain and to strengthen the union.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster) *rose*——

Mr. Gow: I shall not give way. The House has been patient and I have almost done.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is in her place. I do not recommend resignation. It is every bit as painful as I had expected. No doubt the Prime Minister would face the departure of some of her colleagues with greater equanimity than that of others. I do not know into which category I fall. However, Ministers of State are of no importance. They come and go, and when they go their room is soon filled. Life goes on for the Department very much as before—although, following the appointment of my hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), to whom we send our congratulations and good wishes, no doubt very much better than before.

As right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House know, for the departed Minister, tomorrow is very different from today. Only my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and possibly not even she, understands how deep is my regret at my departure. But I have one consolation that is denied to all others the memory of the four years of the previous Parliament, when it was my privilege to

[Mr. Gow]

have tried to be of some help to the finest chief, the most resolute leader and the kindest friend that any Member of this House could hope to serve.

I disagree profoundly with the new policy on which the Government have embarked. I fear that this change of policy will prolong and not diminish Ulster's agony. With all my heart—it is quite a big heart—I pray that I am wrong.

4.43 pm

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), not only because he has articulated, in a way that I could never attempt, the views of the rank and file citizens of Northern Ireland — unionists, nationalists, Protestants and Roman Catholics—but because he was a promising Minister who sacrificed a promising career because of his integrity. The fact that the hon. Member was intently listened to, even by those who disagree with him, proves that he is respected and admired for that integrity.

The House will have gathered that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will be voting against the motion. However, I fully recognise that I have a duty and responsibility to explain plainly and sincerely why we shall take that course. We opposed the Anglo-Irish agreement because it will destroy any possibility of achieving peace, stability and reconciliation — three words that have found themselves by accident in the agreement's preamble. Those words have been repeated —I do not say this in a disrespectful way — rather aimlessly in the debate so far.

During my six years as leader of the Ulster Unionist party, my objective has been to achieve for all the people of Northern Ireland those prizes of peace, stability and reconciliation. As leader of the largest party in Northern Ireland I feel, as I have always felt, that I have a duty to lead. For any party leader, that means some political risk. I accepted those risks, because I had to consider—today I still have to consider—the young people to whom the Prime Minister referred when she spoke at Hillsborough on the day of the signing. The fact that I am nearer the finishing post than are those young people, makes that consideration all the more compelling.

With all that in mind, in April 1984 I endorsed the policy paper "The Way Forward". The main thrust of that paper was equal British rights for all British citizens. I shall read what I believe, and what the Prime Minister conceded in the aftermath of her statement a week ago, to be the key paragraph:

"The time is now ripe for both communities in Northern Ireland to realise that, essentially, their problems will have to be solved in Northern Ireland by their political representatives and that any future prospect for them and their children is best provided for within the Northern Ireland context. This will require a mutual recognition of each other's hopes and fears. Only rights can be guaranteed, not aspirations".

The next phrase is probably the most telling for an Ulster Unionist leader to use:

"but it is the responsibility of the majority to persuade the minority that the Province is also theirs."

When a leader gives a positive lead, there is always criticism. All party leaders, great and small—I do not mean in stature but in the numbers of their Back-Bench Members — are criticised, and this case was no exception. After much criticism, discussion and persuasion, the entire document was endorsed as party policy. However, although there was widespread interest from within the ranks of the minority, as well as the majority, there was little response from the elected representatives of the minority, except one good friend of mine who said, "You really terrified us with that phrase about convincing our people that the Province is also theirs. That would not suit us." The Leader of the Opposition said that it was a tragedy that we did not carry forward our thinking on that occasion more than 18 months ago. He said that it was a tragedy that there was not fuller debate on that document and on the considerable shift in principles set out in the document. To my great regret, those proposals for achieving peace, stability and reconciliation within the bounds of Northern Ireland have been snuffed out by the Anglo-Irish agreement, and that document must be regarded as so much waste paper.

I owe it to the House to explain why the agreement will bring not peace, but the sword. On the day when the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) announced his decision to abolish Stormont, he justified his decision—he could be forgiven for putting forward that justification at such an early stage—on the grounds that it would end violence. However, as the IRA had demanded Stormont's removal, it naturally regarded the decision as the first payment of the Danegeld. The right hon. Gentleman did not intend it in that way, but I hope that he will accept my word for it that that was how it looked to the so-called army council of the IRA.

The Prime Minister, like many of us in humbler positions, is tempted, especially in times of stress, to use phrases produced by her advisers—to give them their polite title—and such may have been the origin of a sentence uttered by the Prime Minister in her address to journalists at the signing ceremony. The sentence made my blood run cold. To quote from the transcript, she said:

"I was not prepared to tolerate the situation of continuing violence."

That fatal sentence—I fear that it will literally be fatal for many—will convince the so-called army council of the IRA that, reinforced by the sweeping one-way concessions in the agreement, continued violence will extract the third and final payment of the Danegeld in the shape of an Ireland designed to their specifications, not the specifications of Dr. FitzGerald or even Mr. Haughey. Indeed, the IRA claimed credit for the concessions two weeks before the signing. At the Sinn Fein conference, the IRA spokesman, Martin McGuinness, declared that any concessions to violence in the coming agreement would be welcomed by the IRA as a surrender to the armed struggle.

Far from the prospect of peace, I fear that we must brace ourselves for a renewed onslaught from a terrorist movement convinced of victory. That movement is in no way worried about the possible weaning away of Catholic support, which will not reduce its capacity for murder. As General Grivas said, there is a handicap in having too many supporters. He reckoned—he knew what he was talking about—that the maximum number of murderers he needed at any time was about 150. The IRA cares nothing for the predicted drop in support for Sinn Fein in terms of the ballot box, which it regards as ancillary to what it calls its "cutting edge" of terror.

The second casualty of the agreement is stability, because stability depends on a known way. But how can there be a known way when there is no consent? During

the past 15 years, the only period of stability was that achieved by the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason). He achieved that stability by making it clear in the honest, forthright terms for which he is noted, what was not going to happen, and by making it equally clear, in words and in deeds, that he would stand no nonsense from any quarter. I must say — this may pain Conservative Members — that, ironically, Conservative Central Office accurately forecast the end of what I call Mason stability, in the daily notes to candidates dated 11 April 1979. It stated:

"The next government will come under considerable pressure to launch a new high-powered initiative on Northern Ireland with the object of establishing another power-sharing government in the province which would pave the way for a federal constitution linking Ulster to the Irish Republic."

We need not await the verdict of history to judge the accuracy of that forecast. For the past six years, we have seen a constant stream of foolish, failed initiatives, confusion and instability.

The third casualty of the agreement is reconciliation. Progress in that area is possible only if those who must be reconciled believe themselves to be secure. If Roman Catholics are meant to be assured by the agreement, why do so many of them say that they share my view? Why do so many of them tell me that they have conveyed their reservations to the Northern Ireland Office? I am in no position to confirm that; I depend upon their word. The answer is that they have never accepted — nor do they want — Dublin's protecting power stance. Far more significantly, they have made it clear that they do not wish to live in a cold war atmosphere created by this proposed regime for which the necessary consent simply does not exist.

Tallying with the impressive quotations by the hon. Member for Eastbourne, the nightmare of Roman Catholics was expressed to me last Saturday by three young Roman Catholic constituents as they left the so-called loyalist rally—in reality a pro-union rally—at the city hall. They begged me to persuade the Prime Minister to think again and, as one of them put it, to

"beg her not to condemn us to spending the rest of our lives in an atmosphere of distrust and tension with our Protestant neighbours."

That was a very moving occasion for me.

That grim prospect has been publicly recognised by church representatives, authoritative newspaper editors, moderate organisations and individuals, and, most of all, by those who have worked so hard for reconciliation in Northern Ireland and are now depressed because all that they have achieved has been obliterated at a stroke.

I notice that newspapers such as *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* criticised the Government's failure to reassure unionists. I understand—this was hinted at by the Leader of the Opposition—that the Northern Ireland Office is contemplating, at the expense of the taxpayer, providing copies of the agreement to every household. But the Secretary of State, who is observant, will know that the main newspapers in Northern Ireland have twice set out the full text of the agreement, unabridged and without journalistic comment. The people have read it for themselves, and the Government's difficulty is that the people understand what they have read. Perhaps the Government intend to circulate a publication placing a gloss on the agreement. Dublin will do likewise, but they will conflict. The statements are already conflicting. I fear that the second state will be worse than the first.

The Government have a credibility problem, created not by them but for them by the Dublin Government, who leaked the agreement four days before the signing and who circulated copies of it two days before the signing to foreign embassies and other institutions. That breach of good faith with Her Majesty's Government, not by the Government, placed Her Majesty's Ministers in a position where they had no alternative but to mislead. That is no accusation; I am trying to defend Ministers. In good faith, they had agreed with Dublin to maintain as late as the Thursday afternoon before the signing on the Friday that agreement had not yet been reached. It is not in a spirit of accusation but out of sympathy with Her Majesty's Ministers that I say that three Ministers of the utmost integrity were placed in such a position—the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland during Northern Ireland Question Time, the Prime Minister at Prime Minister's Question Time and the Leader of the House at Business Question Time. All were forced to use the phrase, "if an agreement is reached", when, thanks to the Dublin double-cross, the whole world knew that agreement had already been reached.

I should like to address a personal word to the Prime Minister. Millions of our fellow British citizens throughout this nation feel that the Prime Minister has a lasting contribution to make to the destiny of the nation, but if she is to fulfil their expectations she must retain her standing and authority. I am sure that the Prime Minister knows that she owes it to those people not to damage those assets by lending her name to statements which have no validity or veracity.

One of the Prime Minister's statements asserted that the status of Northern Ireland is unchanged. I accept that the territory is not to be transferred—or not yet at any rate — and technically it could be claimed that the final approval of legislation will rest with Parliament and the Crown. In reality, however, as all hon. Members know and as the hon. Member for Eastbourne clearly stated, the legislation will be formulated and agreed, because the agreement states:

"determined efforts shall be made through the Conference to resolve any differences."

In reality, therefore, Parliament and the Queen will give rubber stamp approval to legislation designed by a form of coalition with a foreign sovereign state.

As I said earlier in my comments about the Prime Minister's commanding position in the nation, my plea to the Prime Minister is not to allow anyone to continue to say in her name that the status of Northern Ireland is unchanged. I trust that she has already rebuked the subordinates who led her to claim that the agreement contains, to quote her own words,

"the most formal commitment to the principle of consent made by any Irish Government."—[*Official Report*, 18 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 19.]

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup pointed out that the same commitment was given by a previous Irish Government in the Sunningdale agreement of 1973 — which was also registered as an international agreement at the United Nations. The right hon. Gentleman will also confirm that an even earlier commitment was entered into by the Irish Government in 1925 and that that agreement was lodged at the League of Nations.

In the course of what I hope will be a constructive and well ordered debate — I am not casting any reflection

[Mr. James Molyneaux]

upon the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the responsibility lies with hon. Members — the House is entitled to ask what is new about that commitment or in Irish attitudes since 1925 and 1973.

The Prime Minister will not mind my saying that, over the years, she has sought my assessment of attitudes and feelings in Northern Ireland. In what may be my last contribution in the House, I am sure she will not object if I report to her in the presence of right hon. and hon. Members. I have to say honestly and truthfully that in 40 years in public life I have never known what I can only describe as a universal cold fury, which some of us have thus far managed to contain. I beg the Prime Minister not to misjudge the situation but to examine and assess the damage which will be done to the aims of peace, stability and reconciliation. Perhaps the leader of the Labour party and the leaders of the other opposition parties will not mind me saying to the Prime Minister that she will lose nothing in the eyes of the House or of the country if she decides to steer a safer course.

5.6 pm

Mr. James Prior (Waveney): Taking part in this debate is bound to be a painful business for anyone who has served in Northern Ireland, as one is bound to have mixed emotions. Over a period, in Northern Ireland and among one's unionist friends on the Back Benches, one develops a great affection and respect for their views. I have come to respect the views of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and of other unionist Members.

I did not share the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) three years ago when I tried to set up the Assembly, but recognise that my hon. Friend has always held very strong views in favour of the unionists. I have always considered my hon. Friend to be a romantic unionist. I do not believe that his idea for a regional council, included in the 1979 Tory party manifesto, was a runner in Northern Ireland, but I am sure that I speak for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister when I say that if it had been a runner it would have been by far the easiest course to take. I do not believe, however, that at that time or at any time since the proposal would have commanded the support of the people of Northern Ireland.

The right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) was applauded by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley, but I must tell him that there was no great peace in his day. He will accept that terrorism continued and stability was lacking. It is a myth to believe that there has been peace or stability in Northern Ireland in the last 14 or 15 years, because there has not.

More hon. Members are dominated by a feeling that if one is in politics and trying to make a contribution one must take some risks, because the risk of doing nothing does not necessarily solve the problem. Had the Government accepted the option of simply continuing without change, there would be no progress towards peace and stability and the agony of terrorism, the murders and the funerals would continue. Accusations that the Government and the defence forces are not sincere in trying to contain and destroy terrorism would also continue. I came to the conclusion that the risks of doing nothing were greater than the risks of trying to make changes, given that any change in Northern Ireland would be bound to be resisted by one side or the other. We have seen some examples of that today.

We have heard, too, that the rundown of the economy, rising unemployment and the sheer weight of public expenditure are far greater in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in the United Kingdom, and it is a very bad thing for any economy to be so dependent on public expenditure. All those things lead one to believe that efforts must be made to bring the community together so that terrorism can be isolated and perhaps in the long term greater peace and security provided. I use the phrase "in the long term" advisedly, because we know that in the next few weeks wicked people will seek to raise the temperature by murdering people to ensure that no settlement takes place. We all know that such people are to be found in the IRA. Therefore, things may well get worse before they get better.

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): They may not get better.

Mr. Prior: That may be so—who can tell?—but it does not and should not stop us making a great effort to see what we can do.

The unionists are proud people with a great tradition and they have suffered enormously. The whole House should recognise that. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne has said that the silent unionist majority are not understood. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and most people in the House understand that silent majority and the worries expressed by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley today. We know that the agreement offends their view of the constitution. We must also accept that, although it makes no difference to the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, in the eyes of the unionists it changes that status in Northern Ireland itself. Frankly, if it did not do so to some extent, there would be no chance of getting the minority community to accept it. We must accept that and understand why it raises problems for the unionists. We do them less than justice if we do not appreciate that.

I believe that, despite the fears of the unionists, there are great advantages for them. First, there is the reaffirmation of the binding international treaty. Secondly, the signing of the agreement on extradition for political offences is also important. Thirdly, if they can do a deal on devolution, the effect of the Intergovernmental Conference will be reduced. Fourthly, they should now press for more local government powers, to which they are entitled under these arrangements.

I hope that the nationalists, too, will do a deal on devolution, because it is also to their advantage to have government within Northern Ireland by the people of Northern Ireland with less influence from the Republic and perhaps from the Government and Parliament in London. Secondly, the nationalists should now co-operate much more fully on security. We know that the vast majority of them abhor violence, but in the past they have not done enough to convince all the people, and especially the unionists, that they are really serious about security matters. I hope that names will now go forward to the police authority and to the other institutions in Northern Ireland engaged in security matters.

The nationalists should also convince the Government of the Republic that, as the agreement has been well

received in the Republic, it is time for the Republic to go a step further and renounce article 2 of its constitution. The Government of the Republic may have been surprised at the welcome given to the agreement, so they are now in a stronger position to take action in that respect.

I am sure that the British Government understand the mood of the unionists, and it is important that they should do so. Hard things will be said and done. Hard things are often said in Ulster because that is the way in which people express themselves, although only the more adventurous spirits do so while the others simply keep quiet.

I believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has shown enormous courage. I do not know whether my support is a help or an embarrassment to her, but I assure her that I have nothing but praise for the part that she has played in these negotiations. She has made a very difficult decision. If she has taken some time to make up her mind about it, that is the more to her credit and shows her desire that the unionists should in no circumstances be excluded from the United Kingdom.

A genuine effort has been made to try to achieve peace in Northern Ireland. We cannot go on as we are. Neither the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley nor my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne has put forward any convincing alternative. There is no other way but to take some chances in the interests of peace in Northern Ireland as a whole. All who have been working for reconciliation will wish to know that there is much greater understanding of the position of the unionists in Northern Ireland than they may have thought in the past, but at the same time we look to them to try to come to terms with people whom that have disliked—I put it no higher than that—for so long.

I believe that the unionists should trust my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the House. I beg unionist Members to reconsider their proposal to resign their seats. I believe that by trusting the House and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who is a unionist, they will be able to achieve a more peaceful and prosperous life for their constituents and that the whole of Northern Ireland will benefit. Those of us who have lived in Northern Ireland but are English make no bones about the difficulty of understanding all the workings of the Irish mind. I know that the Irish do not trust us and that they object to much of what we do, but perhaps for once they will recognise that there is genuine respect for their point of view and a determination to try to make some slight progress in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland and of the United Kingdom. If they can approach this issue in that way, the courage of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—which is echoed a thousand times over by the courage of unionists and others in Northern Ireland—will have some reward.

Some of my hon. Friends may have doubted my motives over the years. My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), for instance, may not always have thought that I was pursuing policies designed to achieve reconciliation or that I fully understood the views of the unionists. I believe that we should all unite under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at this difficult time, because, if we show unity and understanding here, that may have at least some effect on the people of Northern Ireland.

5.20 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): During the course of this debate it seems that we have been tilting at a number of imaginary windmills. Some speakers have referred to the breaking of the Union while others have talked about the creation of a united Ireland. It is quite clear to anyone who has taken the trouble to read the proposals that neither of these issues is contained within the agreement. Repeatedly arguments have ben put up to defeat issues that are not within the agreement.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), the leader of the Ulster Unionist party, talked about the possibility of a high-powered initiative for federation which he said was in the 1979 briefing notes sent out by Conservative central office. I personally believe in confederation as an approach. Confederation would enable the Irish of the north who are Catholics to look towards Dublin, whilst the Irish of the north who are Protestants or unionists would look towards London. However, this agreement is no more about confederation than it is about breaking the Union or the creation of a united Ireland.

The agreement is a genuine attempt by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach to break the straitjacket that has become Northern Ireland. The Hillsborough agreement represents the outcome of months of effort by politicians and civil servants who have made a genuine effort to reconcile the two traditions in Ireland. Like the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), I have had the privilege of spending time in Northern Ireland and the Republic, most recently as part of a Liberal-SDP commission under Lord Donaldson. In July, we published our report entitled "What future for Northern Ireland?" Many of the ideas promoted in that report are contained in the agreement. However, we would have gone further on issues such as the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier. I was pleased when the Prime Minister said earlier that it is something that the House and the Dail could consider further. A parliamentary tier would help to compliment those initiatives which have been taken in this agreement.

We recognise the Hillsborough agreement as an honest and brave attempt to wrench the initiative from the men of violence and to take a few, albeit faltering, steps away from the bigotry and hatred which have led to 2,500 deaths during the past 16 years, 24,000 injuries, and some £11 million-worth of damage in Ulster caused through acts of political violence. We welcome the initiative because it marks an important change in the attitude of the two Governments towards one another.

Some years ago the brave non-sectarian Alliance party in Northern Ireland said:

"positive development of Anglo-Irish relations could lead to the growth of mutual trust and respect in place of bitterness and recrimination which has bedevilled Anglo-Irish relations for too long."

Hillsborough is a step along that road.

This agreement is the bulwark against Sinn Fein. If it fails, it will give credence to the lie that violence alone can bring progress. It will lead to the enticement of more young men and women into violent organisation and violent actions. This agreement is a courageous step by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach to challenge and defeat that lie.

Those who choose to distort and lie about the content of this agreement will be taking the side of violence to sustain their tribalistic and sectarian positions, deliberately

[Mr. David Alton]

keeping alive divisions for their own selfish political ends. The Nobel peace prize winner, Solzhenitsyn, understood the nature of violence. He said:

"Violence can only be concealed by a lie. Anyone who has once proclaimed that violence is his method is inevitably forced to choose the lie as his guiding principle."

The way forward in Northern Ireland is through mutual respect, mutual forgiveness for past injuries and wounds and building up the common ground.

During the Donaldson commission inquiry, I visited the Maze prison where I met a young man, Liam McAnoy. That young man, brought up on the Falls Road, at the age of 18 joined the official IRA, and he committed a murder. He has since renounced violence and 12 years later I had the privilege to meet him. Since then we have corresponded.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne spoke earlier about people who had written to him and who had genuine fears about what might happen in Northern Ireland. Liam McAnoy, who has been consigned to the Maze for an act which he bitterly and sincerely regrets, can now see what needs to be done in Northern Ireland if we are to avoid more bitterness and hatred. In a letter to me he says:

"Justice requires, just as peace demands, the pacific co-existence of both communities in mutual acceptance and respect and in equality of rights. Violence and talk of civil war makes the attainment of co-existence more difficult."

The creation of that justice requires the establishment of bodies such as the Intergovernmental Conference which must win the respect of the Protestant and Catholic communities alike. The founder of the Corrymeela Community, the right Reverend Dr. Ray Davey, in a sermon at Westminster abbey in March 1980, signalled the other prerequisites for peace in Northern Ireland. He said:

"Truth demands that we be willing to look at another's point of view when it is opposed to ours and to try to understand it."

Liberals believe that this requires a moderation which is the only hope of reconciliation.

In the spirit of trying to understand another point of view it is incumbent on all the people of Great Britain, especially the English people, to try to understand the fears and anxieties of the unionists. This agreement was made in secrecy, largely without consultation, without information and without consent. While Dublin—I make no complaint about this—kept the SDLP in the picture, the British Government chose not to involve the Northern Ireland parties in the Hillsborough process. Assemblyman John Cushnahan, the Alliance leader, whom I met here last Friday, told me that many people in Northern Ireland are gravely dissatisfied with the way the agreement was made. We agree with him. Their condition, which is a fair one, is that the secrecy must now end. At the minimum, agendas and conclusions reached by the Intergovernmental Conference must be published. If that does not happen, every matter pursued by the Secretary of State will be represented by some unionists as deriving from the Republic through the deliberations of the Intergovernmental Conference.

Unionists may be tempted to shout treachery and no surrender and to retreat behind historical images of the siege of Londonderry. The unionists claim to be law-abiding members of the Union. How will that square with the erection of shutters and barricades and the repudiation of an agreement endorsed by two democratically elected Parliaments? The remarks by the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) were out of accord with the unionist tradition which has always pledged itself to constitutionality. This morning, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) said:

"The so-called loyalists in Northern Ireland must look again at their definition of loyalty, which means nothing if it does not include support for the authority of the Westminster Parliament. To threaten unconstitutional action even before Parliament has had a chance to debate the proposals will be the action of disloyalists and would only harden the belief of the British people that the unionists are quite incorrigible."

Mr. Molyneaux: Would the hon. Gentleman accept that at the rally on Saturday in Belfast, when passions were running somewhat high, the main cheer came for the portion of my speech when I said:

"Violence is no part of our campaign"?

I was speaking on behalf of my colleagues on this Bench and of my colleagues who represent the Democratic Unionist party.

Mr. Alton: I am glad to hear the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley say that. It is in complete sympathy with everything that I have heard him say in my six years here. I was distressed to hear the comments of one of his colleagues. I hope that we shall talk, as we have during this debate, about how Parliaments and elected Members can reconcile the two traditions. That is the only way to defeat the people who murder and maim to achieve their political objectives.

We appreciate the suffering of unionists, especially during the past 16 years. As many right hon. and hon. Members have said, they are a keen and proud people, but they should remember that we on this side of the water have also suffered. Many of our constituents who were members of Her Majesty's forces have been murdered in the Province. The financial burden has been heavy, and there has been a not inconsiderable loss of civil liberties in Britain because of the tragedy of Northern Ireland.

We in the United Kingdom do not regard the Republic as our enemy. There is a special relationship between us. Many millions of Irish people live and work in Britain and many thousands of British people live and work in Ireland. We are closely integrated. The unionists have a right to be upset by the triumphalism and the talk of victors and vanquished, of which some Catholic clergymen, alas, and politicians have been guilty.

As an English Catholic, I regret the continued intransigence of the Catholic Church on issues such as mixed and inter-Church marriages and integrated Christian education. Like the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), I regret that the SDLP has so far made no gesture to the unionist community about whether it will participate in the Assembly. I hope that the leader of the SDLP will be able to say something about that later.

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): The hon. Gentleman should listen to me more often.

Mr. Alton: I listen regularly to the hon. Gentleman and admire much of what he stands for. The SDLP should now drop its veto on the Northern Ireland Assembly and commit itself to partnership in government in the North. It should also encourage more Catholics to join the Royal Ulster Constabulary. When I was in Northern Ireland earlier this year and met Sir John Hermon, I was intensely worried by the RUC's difficulty in encouraging more Roman Catholics to join, although there has been some improvement this year.

A MORI poll, conducted in 1981, showed that 70 per cent. of Protestants and 62 per cent. of Catholics would accept Northern Ireland remaining as part of the United Kingdom, but with its own Assembly and guarantees for Catholics. My right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) earlier this year said:

"What is needed is a partnership at the level of a devolved government".

If the Government use the Northern Ireland (Constitution) Act 1973 as a framework for devolving power, the guarantees that the Catholic community in the North should be able to expect would be missing. I hope that the Secretary of State will be clearer about the power-sharing proposals and that the SDLP's lingering doubts will be removed. Partnership in government is the best way to remove the alienation of the north's Catholics—of finally extinguishing the Bunsen burner that has kept the cauldron smouldering.

Those of us who heard Noel Dorr, the Irish ambassador in London, speak here last night will have noted that he stressed the alienation of the Roman Catholic community in Northern Ireland. The agreement is about removing that alienation. That is why it is worthy of support.

For unionists, the incentive for being involved in such a partnership is that it will reduce the influence held by Dublin. If political leaders refuse to provide their people with the leadership that they are entitled to expect, the people must be prepared to change those leaders, whether they be unionist or nationalist. The Government should ensure that a copy of the agreement is sent to every household in Northern Ireland. It is not good enough to be told that it has appeared in some Belfast newspapers. If unionist politicians now try to wreck the agreement by forcing by-elections—and I desperately hope that they will reconsider such action—the Government should be prepared to consider holding those elections under a system of proportional representation, as currently applies to local government, Assembly and European Parliament elections. That would turn the elections into a far more convincing test of public opinion and enable the Government to reach over the heads of sectarian leaders.

There is something in the agreement for everyone. For unionists, there is a double guarantee of their right to self-determination within the Six Counties. There is an acceptance of their identity by Dublin and an acceptance that it will be registered publicly at the United Nations. There is to be no Executive rule and no joint authority, both of which are anathema to unionists. There is also the Republic's commitment to ratify the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. There is the promise of better cross-border co-operation and improved security — progress on extradition and trials in another jurisdiction.

For nationalists, there is a recognition of their identity, respect for their democratic aspirations and for their symbols, culture, sports and repeal of offensive legislation such as the Flags and Emblems (Display) Act 1954. There is a chance to be partners in government and of parity of esteem and equality of opportunity.

For all, there is an opportunity of better human rights for individuals and groups and a framework for greater co-operation between our two countries. There is the opportunity for more common services to be developed and the chance in the longer term of parliamentary co-operation and a permanent body to oversee the Intergovernmental Conference. There really is something in this agreement for everyone, and I hope that moderate Unionist politicians will re-examine it in that light.

The alliance report, which we published in July, said:

"the status quo in Northern Ireland is not an option."

That view has been echoed time and again today. The Irish and British Governments have acted boldly in an attempt to shift the status quo. They deserve broad support. Perhaps a small window has opened in Northern Ireland. If men and women of ill will now slam it shut, the violence and despair that will inevitably follow will be upon their heads.

5.36 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): This debate provides a unique occasion for Ulster Unionist representatives, because it is not often that a man gets the opportunity to deliver the oration at his own funeral. When the Prime Minister signed the agreement in Hillsborough castle, she was in reality drafting the obituary of Ulster as we know it in the United Kingdom.

It is important for the House to understand why Ulster Unionists came to that conclusion. We did not reach that conclusion simply because of one document that arrived on 15 November. A long series of events led to that occasion. I am old enough to remember when, in 1969, the Labour Government issued the Downing street declaration, which said:

"the affairs of Northern Ireland are entirely a matter of domestic jurisdiction."

I can recall how our Prime Minister, on 8 December 1980 when in Dublin castle, signed a communiqué with Charles J. Haughey which altered that stance, because the communiqué said that

"the totality of relations within these islands"

was now a fit subject for discussion between the two Governments. From that moment we had the outworking of the "unique relations" between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. We had joint studies, cross-border co-operation and then the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council, the purpose of which was "to provide the overall framework for intergovernmental consultation . . . on all matters of common interest and concern"—

wait for it—

"with particular reference to the achievement of peace, reconciliation and stability and the improvement of relations".

At that stage, the council had a responsibility to deal with matters of mutual interest and concern. We have moved from that to a new status which, under this institution, is to give the Republic of Ireland—a foreign Government—a direct role in the government of Northern Ireland.

It does not end there, because the agreement announced at Hillsborough castle is but the tip of the iceberg. I know that the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State and others have been careful to say that there is no other agreement. But, then, we were told that there was no agreement right up until it was signed at Hillsborough castle. Indeed, some weeks in advance of 15 November, the deputy Prime Minister of the Irish Republic had already had a document printed which he sent to every member of his party. It indicated the full text of the agreement. Incidentally, he said that that agreement was signed by

"the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister of Great Britain."

It represents quite a change in our status when the deputy Prime Minister of the Irish Republic recognises that Northern Ireland is not to be one of our Prime Minister's responsibilities.

[Mr. Peter Robinson]

The document says that the task upon which the conference will embark involves trying to achieve an agreement with our Government on matters such as parades and processions, and putting the UDR out of business. It implies—although we have not yet been told—that the meeting of Ministers will take place in Belfast. It is clearly a framework for further agreements. What other reason could there be for a front cover entitled, "The Republic of Ireland No. 1 Agreement."?

I notice that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is in the Chamber. He has at least been honest with the people of Northern Ireland in saying that the agreement is a process. In the *Irish News*—where else?—he said that it was "a first step." The next day he said that there were to be "progressive stages." Those who had any doubt about where they were to lead were told by him on RTE:

"We are not waiting for Irish unity. We are working for it."

I accept that there is no harm in the hon. Gentleman wanting to work towards that goal, but I wish to ensure that the unionist community in Northern Ireland knows what he and the Republic are working towards. It is clear that this process is intended to take us out of the United Kingdom. Yet the people of Northern Ireland have democratically expressed their wish to stay within it. The agreement is intended to trundle Northern Ireland into a all-Ireland Republic.

The unionist community in Northern Ireland has identified this process. It is not an end in itself, and was never intended to be. It is one step towards a united Ireland. Indeed, the Prime Minister has excused the deal by saying that its laudable aim is to achieve peace, stability, reconciliation and co-operation. That is my aim too. Like some other hon. Members, I live in Northern Ireland. Our stake and investment are in the Northern Ireland community and, most importantly, our families and constituents live there. It is in our interests to have peace, stability, reconciliation and co-operation. If I felt that they were achievable I would grasp them with a heart and a hand, but not outside the union. That would be too high a price to pay.

The document reminds me of another piece of paper waved by a former Prime Minister. In many ways the words are too similar. That Prime Minister's words were "Peace in our time". Under this agreement, peace, stability, reconciliation and co-operation are not achievable. How can they be achieved by alienating the majority of people in Northern Ireland? It was never intended that there should be peace, stability, reconciliation and co-operation as a result of this agreement. After all, if that had been the intention, the Government would have wanted, above all, to take the elected representatives of the majority community in Northern Ireland along with them.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robinson: This may be my last opportunity to address the House. The first time I did so, it was without interruption. I trust that I will be able to speak without interruption today.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robinson: If the document has been intended to do us good, the Prime Minister would have been only too willing to allow the unionist community to be consulted. She would have been only too pleased to take it along with her and to ensure that the representatives of the unionist people in Northern Ireland could have some input to the discussions.

The Government of the Irish Republic were only too happy to give the hon. Member for Foyle that facility. The Government of the Irish Republic and this Government briefed people all over the world. The Government of the Irish Republic briefed the Secretary of State to the Vatican. The President of the United States was briefed, as were the United Nations and the European Community. But those who were to be affected by the deal were kept in the dark.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robinson: I do not intend to give way during my speech. The hon. Gentleman can ask me to give way as much as he likes, but I do not intend to be interrupted by giving way.

I ask the Government to scrap this one-sided, anti-unionist deal and to involve unionists in the process of obtaining peace, stability, reconciliation and co-operation in Northern Ireland. As I have said, we would participate with a heart and a half. More than many, I recognise that it is not my duty simply to say, "No, we will not have it." It is my duty and that of other Unionist representatives to say what can be done in a positive way in Northern Ireland. Before the debate ends, I hope that I shall have had the opportunity to do that.

I want to point out what unionists have done, and are prepared to do within the union.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point of order relates to the very nature of the House. I understand that, other than for major speeches and ministerial statements, the House is a place in which hon. Members' views can, within reason, be scrutinised. Some hon. Members complain that they are misunderstood and that we, on this side of the water, do not fully comprehend this or that. However, if we cannot ask questions of clarification, how can we be expected to understand them?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With his long experience of the House, the hon. Gentleman knows that it is for the hon. Member who has the Floor to decide whether to give way. The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) has made it clear that he does not intend to give way.

Mr. Robinson: The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) knows very well that I have given way to him and many other hon. Members before. But because of the uniqueness of the occasion, I do not intend to do so today. I have a message that I want to leave with the House before I walk out through those doors, and I do not intend to be diverted by any hon. Member.

I call upon the Government to consult and not to confront the unionist community. Unionists have been positive. The former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who laid the Assembly legislation before the House knows very well that it was the unionist community in Northern Ireland that went into the Assembly and that co-operated with the Government. It was the hon. Member for Foyle and his party who stayed outside and withdrew their consent. Is it the reward for those who co-operate

with the Government that an agreement that is ultimately to their destruction should be foisted upon them to the benefit of the hon. Member for Foyle and his party?

The Northern Ireland unionist parties — the Ulster Unionist party with its document, "The Way Forward" and the Democratic Unionist party with its document, "Ulster —the Future Assured"—put forward positive proposals for peace, stability, reconciliation and co-operation in Northern Ireland.

Even in the Northern Ireland Assembly, with the help of the conciliator, Sir Frederick Catherwood, the parties sat down and reached agreement on a framework that the Government could use in negotiations with the political parties—not only the Unionist parties but the Alliance party. We have been positive in Northern Ireland.

I say again that we are prepared to remain positive within the United Kingdom. We are prepared to allow the Prime Minister to engage unionists in constructive politics, and if the Prime Minister wishes to call my bluff, I should be only too happy. Do not confront us and put us out of the union with this deal.

The willingness of the unionist community to seek an agreement is undeterred. If the Government want peace and stability in Ulster, I ask them where that can best be achieved? There seems to be a new rule in British politics —if there is a dispute within a house, the way to solve it is to reach an agreement with the two neighbours. It is even more strange when the agreement reached between the two neighbours gives aid and succour to one of the parties to the dispute.

If the Government want peace, stability, reconciliation and co-operation in Northern Ireland, they must recognise that that can be achieved only by the politicians—the elected representatives of the people of Northern Ireland —reaching agreement. They cannot impose reconciliation; they cannot impose peace and stability and they certainly cannot impose such an agreement which strikes at the fundamental principle in which the majority in Northern Ireland believe, and that is the union. That is the strangest of British strategies.

Does the agreement measure up to the Government's test for the sort of proposal that would be acceptable? The former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland brought the 1982 Act before the House on the basis of

"widespread acceptance throughout the community."

He argued passionately that there had to be "cross-community support." Throughout the years there have been homilies from politicians of one party or another about the necessity for consent in Northern Ireland. They told us that Northern Ireland could not be governed without the consent of the minority.

If that is true, I have to tell the Government that they can never govern Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority. Do they have that consent? Have they tried to access whether there is such consent? Will they test whether there is consent? The people of Northern Ireland have the right and entitlement to be consulted about their constitutional future.

Our citizenship of the United Kingdom does not allow the Government to do whatsoever they may wish with Northern Ireland. Our citizenship of the United Kingdom must be on the same basis as applies in any other part of the United Kingdom. If, for whatever reason—be it good or ill — the Government decide that Northern Ireland must be treated differently from the remainder of the United Kingdom, that can be done only if there is consent, and the consent not only of the Government and Parliament, but of the people of Northern Ireland.

It was that principle, enunciated in the House, that resulted in the referendums for Wales and Scotland. Have not the people of Ulster the same right to be consulted as the people of Wales and Scotland? Do they not have the same right to give their approval to any deal that, ultimately, will affect their future and the way that they are governed? I believe that they have that right and that they should be given it. If this House is not prepared to give them that right, it is incumbent upon the elected representatives of Northern Ireland to give them that right.

Right hon. and hon. Members criticise me, but I ask them how they would like it if the agreement affected their constituencies — if the governance of their people was not directly by this House, but by a structure that allowed a foreign power, at its own behest, to make challenges and to request consultation. The agreement goes even further than that and requires that

"a determined effort is made to resolve the differences"

between the two Governments. I doubt whether many right hon. and hon. Members would want that for themselves or their constituents.

The agreement is not merely consultative. The House should not pass this measure believing that it is only a talking shop, in which the Irish Republic can make comments. It is much more than that. I am sure that the Prime Minister will not mind if I divulge certain comments made during our meeting yesterday, when we put the point about consultation to her on two occasions. On the first occasion, she was about to speak when the question was answered by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. I asked whether only a consultative role was involved or whether it was more than that. He said, "It is not executive." On the second occasion, the Prime Minister said, "It is what it is in this agreement."

What do those who have been more candid say about the agreement? The Prime Minister of the Irish Republic says:

"it is more than consultation".

The deputy Prime Minister of the Irish Republic says:

"the agreement goes beyond the right to consult."

John F. O'Conner, the dean of the faculty of law at UCC, said:

"Whatever the eventual political results, the legal result of the new agreement is that Northern Ireland has now become subject to a status in international law which has no real parallels elsewhere. It never was, nor has it become, a separate entity in international law. It is not a condominium. It is a province of the United Kingdom which for the first time has become subject to the legal right of two sovereign governments to determine how all matters which go to the heart of sovereignty in that area shall in future be determined."

It is not only the unionists — *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may not like what the dean of the faculty of law said, but if they want to dispute it, they had better do so with him.

It is not only the unionists who believe that the deal is unfair to the unionist community in Northern Ireland. Senator Mary Robinson of the Irish Republic — no relation of mine, I assure the House — rejected the agreement because it went too far. She said:

"This is absolutely the most serious moment in the political development of this island since we gained independence."

That lady is no unionist—she was one of the signatories to the Forum report. Yet even she says that the agreement goes too far.

[Mr. Robinson]

The *Belfast Telegraph*, never a close friend of the unionist community, said:

"Even those who, like this newspaper, can see benefit flowing from closer consultation with Dublin, must draw the line at such institutionalised links between the two countries."

I say again that it is not only the Ulster Unionists and the Democratic Unionists who believe that the deal goes too far. The ordinary citizens of Northern Ireland, never previously involved in politics, were present at the mass demonstration at the city hall in Belfast.

I was born a free citizen of the United Kingdom. I was brought up to respect the Union flag. At my father's knee I was taught the love that I should have for the monarchy, and throughout my life I have put that into practice. I was nurtured on the principle of the greatness of our British heritage. I have taught all that to my children. I now have to tell this House that over the last 17 cruel years, when Ulster has been confronted by a vicious campaign of terrorism, not one of the unionist community was prepared to allow that campaign to shatter his loyalty to the United Kingdom.

It is not a one-way street. It never has been for Ulster. We cheered with this country during the Falklands campaign. Ulster suffered its losses just as many did on this side of the Irish sea. During the second world war, we made sacrifices, just as many people in this part of the United Kingdom, and we did it without conscription. During the first world war, Ulster gave of its best for Britain. After watching the Ulster Volunteers on the Somme when 5,000 Ulstermen lost their lives at the enemy's hand, a great British general—General Spender—said, "I am not an Ulsterman but there is no one in the world whom I would rather be after seeng the Ulster Volunteers in action." In peace and in war Ulster stood by the kingdom. That has been the way of loyal Ulster.

I never believed that I would see a British Government who were prepared to damage Ulster's position in the United Kingdom. Our resolve has been hardened by the bitter times in past years when a terrorist campaign was aimed at undermining our position in the United Kingdom. There would never have been a Hillsborough castle agreement if the IRA had not been bombing and shooting. That is a fact of life. Can one blame the people of Northern Ireland for thinking that violence works? It makes the task harder for those of us who chose the way of constitutional politics to tell people not to involve themselves in violence.

I wish that the House had a sense of the deep feeling of anger and betrayal in Northern Ireland. Yesterday, while I was waiting in an ante-room in No. 10 Downing street before meeting the Prime Minister I saw on the wall a portrait of Rudyard Kipling, who was a great patriot. I recall the words of his poem "Ulster 1912", which begins:

"The dark eleventh hour
Draws on and sees us sold
To every evil power
We fought against of old."

Later, it states:

"The blood our fathers split,
Our love, our toils, our pains,
Are counted us for guilt,
And only bind our chains.
Before an Empire's eyes
The traitor claims his price.
What need of further lies?
We are the sacrifice."

6.3 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Listening to some of the hon. Members who have spoken in the debate one could have been forgiven for thinking that we were not discussing a serious problem, but, after listening to the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), one should not be in any doubt that we are discussing a serious problem.

I was glad to see a full House at the beginning of the debate. That is the first achievement of the Anglo-Irish conference. It shows that the serious human problem facing the peoples of these islands has at last been given the priority that it deserves. It has been put at the centre of the stage.

I was glad also that a meeting took place at the highest level between the British and the Irish Governments at which a framework for ongoing discussion was set up. In an excellent unionist speech, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) told us what we already knew—that he was a committed unionist and that he did not particularly like to associate with the loud-mouthed persons with whom I have to live. We did not learn from him of the problem in Northern Ireland—that we have a deeply divided society. The hon. Gentleman did not bother to analyse why we have a deeply divided society and the political instability and violence which the agreement seeks to address.

This is the first time that we have had a real framework within which to address the problem. The problem is not just about relationships with Northern Ireland. One need only listen to the speeches of Northern Ireland Members to know that it is about relationships in Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. Those interlocking relationships should be addressed within the framework of the problem. The framework of the problem can only be the framework of the solution, and that is the British-Irish framework. There is no road towards a solution to this problem that does not contain risks. The road that has been chosen by both Governments is the road of maximum consensus and is, therefore, the road of minimum risk. We should welcome that.

Our community has just gone through 15 years of the most serious violence that it has ever seen. Northern Ireland has a population of 1·5 million people. About 2,500 people have lost their lives in political violence—the equivalent of 86,000 people in Britain. Twenty thousand people have been seriously maimed. When I say "maimed", I mean maimed. That is the equivalent of 750,000 people on this island. About £11 billion-worth of damage has been caused to the economies of Ireland—North and South. In 1969, public expenditure by the British Government in subsidy, subvention or whatever one calls it was £74 million; today it is £1·5 billion. Two new prisons have been built and a third is about to be opened—our only growth industry. There are 18-year-olds who have known nothing but violence and armed soldiers on their streets. Young people reach 18 and then face the highest unemployment we have ever had. Forty-four per cent. of the population is under 25.

If that is not a time bomb for the future, what is? If that is not a problem that needs the serious attention of the House and the serious attention that the Prime Ministers of Britain and of the Republic of Ireland have given it in the past 18 months, what is? Is this not a subject that screams out for political leaders in Northern Ireland to take a good look at themselves, their parties and the leadership

that they have given? There is only one clear-cut lesson to be learnt from this tragedy—that our past attitudes have brought us where we are. Unless we agree to take a hard look at our past attitudes, we shall be going nowhere fast and we shall be committing ourselves to the dustbin of history, clutching our respective flagpoles.

We are being given some choices. The agreement gives us no more than an opportunity to begin the process of reconciliation. The choices offered to the people of Northern Ireland are the choices offered by hon. Members here present. The unionist parties have consistently sought to protect the integrity of their heritage in Ireland—the Protestant heritage — and no one should quarrel with that. A society is richer for its diversity. My quarrel with the unionist parties has been that they have sought to protect their heritage by holding all the power in their own hands and by basing that on sectarian solidarity. That is an exclusive use of power which is inherently violent because it permanently excludes a substantial section of the community from any say in its affairs.

That was spelt out clearly by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) when he said that he offered an act of leadership. He was sincere. He said that the majority should assure the minority that they would be made part of society. He tells me that it is an act of leadership to make me and the people I represent part of our society 65 years after Northern Ireland was created.

We have been lectured about democracy and the democratic process by hon. Members from both unionist parties. They are practitioners of the democratic process. I do not want to spend too much time on examples of their practice, but they were the masters of gerrymander. Today their voices are somewhat muted, but they have not changed much.

In Belfast city council not one position on any board has gone to a minority representative. One council has even apologised to the electorate because it made a mistake in appointing a member of the SDLP to one position out of 105.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The hon. Gentleman is complaining because his party cannot win elections. Many people here have to face the fact that their party cannot win elections. It is a fact of life, but it is not a reason for power sharing.

Mr. Hume: I thought that the hon. Gentleman's intervention might be intelligent. I shall not lecture him on how Northern Ireland was set up, how it was deliberately created and how from day one it has been run on a sectarian basis. The only way to break that down is through partnership.

Hon. Members from both unionist parties have lectured us about democracy. That brings us to the heart of the Irish problem. The sovereignty of this Parliament is the basis of the British system and of the rule of law. The sovereignty of Parliament has been defied only twice in this century—on both occasions by Ulster Unionists.

In 1912 the Ulster Unionists defied the sovereign wish of Parliament to grant home rule. That was only devolution within the United Kingdom. They objected and accepted instead home rule for themselves. That taught them a lesson which they have never forgotten—that if one threatens a British Government or British Parliament and produces crowds in the streets from the Orange lodges the British will back down. Others learnt from that that if one wins by the democratic process the British will back down to their loyalist friends and then they say, "Why not use force instead?" Those two forces are still at the heart of preventing a development in relationships within Ireland. Those who threaten violence are those who use it. The same two forces are opposing the agreement today.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that in 1969 he brought on to the streets of Ulster the hordes who, when he left them alone, fell into the hands of violent men? The hon. Gentleman says that he is not allowed to share responsibility in Northern Ireland, but as I have told him before the SDLP refused to put their names forward for positions within the council of which I am a member and tried to nominate Sinn Fein members instead. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will apply his mind to that.

Mr. Hume: I am applying my mind to the record of the unionist parties, the members of which have spoken today. I shall apply my mind to my own party later. I am expecting everyone to do a little rethinking.

The logic of the road down which the unionist leadership is taking its people is inescapable. Unionists once again are prepared to defy the sovereign will of this Parliament. When they come back after their elections and Parliament says that it refuses to back down, what will they do? Where will that lead us? They are going down the UDI road. That is their logic. They say that they are loyal to the United Kingdom. They are the loyalists and they must accept the sovereignty of Her Majesty's Parliament. But they do not.

What would happen if London Members resigned, were re-elected and returned saying that the majority in Greater London wanted to keep the Greater London council? That would lead to a complete breakdown of parliamentary sovereignty. That is where the unionists are leading us and they must know it.

It is sad in 1985 to meet people who are suspicious of everybody. They are suspicious of London, suspicious of Dublin and suspicious of the rest of the world. Worst of all, they are suspicious of the people with whom they share a little piece of land—their neighbours. It is sad that they never talk of the future except with fear. They talk always of the past. Their thoughts are encapsulated in that marvellous couplet

"To hell with the future and Long live the past.
May God in his mercy look down on Belfast."

That is more relevant than the words of Rudyard Kipling.

There has to be a better way. However grand we think we are, we are a small community. We cannot for ever live apart. Those sentiments were expressed in 1938 by Lord Craigavon, one of their own respected leaders. What are we sentencing our people to if we continue to live apart? People are entitled to live apart, but they are not entitled to ask everyone else to pay for it.

The other opposition to the agreement comes from the Provisional IRA and its political surrogates. They murder fellow Irishmen in the name of Irish unity. They murder members of the UDR and RUC — fellow Irishmen. Those members see themselves as protectors of their heritage, but the Provisional IRA brutally murders UDR and RUC members in the name of uniting the Irish people, the heritage with which we must unite if we are ever to unite Ireland.

The IRA's political wing is full of contradictions. I hope that no one in the House has any sympathy with it.

[Mr. Hume]

Its members blow up factories, yet complain about unemployment. Its political spokesmen complain about cuts in public expenditure and in the same evening the military wing blows up £2 million of public expenditure in one street. A motion rightly condemns the execution of a young South African poet, but the IRA then shoots in the back of the head a young unemployed man and puts bullets in the head of a young man and his wife in west Belfast. The IRA complains about Diplock courts, yet runs kangaroo courts. What does that offer Ireland?

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) asks about Irish unity. In the late 20th century it is nonsense that there should be divisions. If European nations which twice in this century alone have slaughtered one another by the millions can build institutions that allow them to grow together at their own speed, why cannot we do the same? He quoted me in an interview as saying that I was working for Irish unity, but I went on to say that those who think that Irish unity is round the corner are wired to the moon.

The divisions in Ireland go back well beyond partition. Centuries ago the leaders of Irish republicanism said that they wanted to unite Ireland by replacing the name of "Catholic-Protestant dissenter" with the common name of "Irishman". That was in 1795. Thirty years before partition Parnell said that Ireland could never be united or have its freedom until the fears of the Protestant minority in Ireland could be conciliated. This is a deep problem. It will not be solved in a week or in a fortnight. The agreement says that if Ireland is ever to be united it will be united only if those who want it to be united can persuade those who do not want it to be united. Sovereignty has nothing to do with maps but everything to do with people.

The people of Ireland are divided on sovereignty. They will be united only by a process of reconciliation in which both traditions in Ireland can take part and agree. If that happens, it will lead to the only unity that matters—a unity that accepts that the essence of unity is the acceptance of diversity.

Our third choice is the agreement. For the first time it sets up a framework that addresses the problem of the interlocking relationships between the people of both Irelands. It is the approach of maximum consensus. It is the way of minimum risk. For the first time—this is a positive element in the agreement—it respects the equal validity of both traditions. That is what the right hon. and hon. Members of the Unionist party are complaining about. It is not a concession to me or to the people whom I represent. It is an absolute right to the legitimate expression of our identity and of the people I represent. Nobody can take that from us. The recognition of the equal validity of both traditions removes for the first time every excuse for the use of violence by anybody in Ireland to achieve his objective. A framework for genuine reconciliation is provided. Both sections of our community can take part in it.

Several hon. Members have said that the SDLP has a double veto on devolution. I have already said several times to them in public, but let me say it again so that they may hear it, that I believe in the partnership between the different sections of the community in Northern Ireland. That is the best way to reconcile our differences. By working together to build our community we shall diminish the prejudices that divide us. The agreement means that I am prepared to sit down now and determine how we shall administer the affairs of Northern Ireland in a manner that is acceptable to both traditions.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hume: No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I noticed that the right hon. and hon. Members of the Unionist parties were allowed to speak without interruption. When they were interrupted, they did not agree to give way.

The second question that appears to excite people about my party's attitude relates to the security forces and to policing in Northern Ireland. Our position—this is not a policy but a statement of fact that applies to every democratic society—is that law and order are based upon political consensus. Where political consensus is absent there is an Achilles heel. Violent men in Northern Ireland take advantage of that Achilles heel. For the first time the Intergovernmental Conference will address that question. It has committed itself to addressing that question. It has also committed itself to addressing the relationship between the community and the security forces. I want to give every encouragement to the conference to do so at the earliest possible opportunity. If it does so, it will have our fullest co-operation. I want the people whom I represent to play the fullest possible part, as do any citizens in a democratic society, in the process of peace and order. While we await the outcome we shall continue to give our full and unqualified support to the police force in impartially seeking out anybody who commits a crime in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has a position to state in this argument. I may not happen to agree with him, but just as it was wrong——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman has raised this point of order before. He knows that it is at the discretion of the hon. Member who has the floor to decide whether to give way.

Mr. Hume: What is the alternative to the process of reconciliation and the breaking down of barriers? Why should anybody be afraid of the process of reconciliation? Anybody who is afraid has no confidence in himself or herself. It means that they cannot engage in a process of reconciliation. If they cannot retain mutual respect for their own position as well as for that of somebody else, they have no self-confidence. Therefore, they should not be representatives of the people of Northern Ireland. The only alternative is the old one of hopelessness, tit-for-tat, revenge—the old doctrine of an eye for an eye which has left everybody blind in Northern Ireland.

This is well summed up by a better poet than Kipling, the good, honest voice of the North, Louis MacNeice. Describing the old hopelessness, which is what we are being offered by those who will not take this opportunity, he said:

> "Why should I want to go back
> To you, Ireland, my Ireland?
> The blots on the page are so black
> That they cannot be covered with shamrock.
> I hate your grandiose airs,
> Your sob-stuff, your laugh and your swagger,
> Your assumption that everyone cares
> Who is the king of your castle.

> Castles are out of date,
> The tide flows round the children's sandy fancy,
> Put up what flag you like, it is too late
> To save your soul with bunting."

It is far too late for the people of Northern Ireland to save their souls with bunting or with flag waving. We should note that the followers of those who wave flags as though they were the upholders of the standards of those flags paint their colours on kerbstones for people to walk over. In other words, there is no leadership and no integrity in that approach and no respect. The alternative that we are offered is an opportunity which, like others, may fail. It poses great challenges and risks. The challenges are daunting and difficult, but the choices are not. There is no other choice. There is no other road.

6.28 pm

Mr. Adam Butler (Bosworth): I do not have in my voice today the power of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), but I hope that I can emulate my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). Even if I speak quietly, I hope that I can speak as much sense as he did. So far, there have been three contributions from those who represent different parties in Northern Ireland. They make me believe that I was right the other night to vote for the televising of the proceedings of this Chamber. If the television cameras had been here, the viewers, whether in Northern Ireland or in the remainder of the United Kingdom, would have obtained a much better appreciation of the problem and of the advocates of the various points of view.

I served as a Northern Ireland Minister for nearly four years. Since then I have had the opportunity for reflection. Perhaps my views are now a little more objective than they were then. Whatever my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) said, although there was mistrust of English Ministers when we first appeared, I hope that I and my colleagues and friends who served with me in Northern Ireland left the impression that we were seeking to do our bit and to make our contribution to the resolution of the problems of Northern Ireland. I know that my right hon. Friend did that.

I have already expressed my view, on the occasion of the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last week. It is one of general welcome for the agreement. However, I cannot say that I like it, or necessarily welcome one of its fundamental points. Why should I, as a British citizen, automatically like and welcome the fact that advice can come from a Minister of a Government of a foreign state? That is the technical position of the Republic of Ireland, whatever history tells us.

However, I accept the agreement, for a reason that lies in what the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said. This is where I fall out with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne and others who have spoken. This point is probably the fundamental point at issue in the Northern Ireland problem. Are we talking about a democratic system, or part of a democratic system, where a simple majority should hold sway regardless, where first-past-the-post should rule and 50 per cent. plus should win the day? If so, life would be easy, but Stormont tried that for 50 years.

I believe the reason to be that stated by the hon. Member for Foyle, and that is the difference within Northern Ireland between the two communities. There is a division now that has been made worse by recent history. I do not need to lecture hon. Members about the position in Northern Ireland. However, one has to recognise certain basic facts. Two thirds, or less now, of the population are fundamentally unionists and loyalists, looking to London and Westminster, while the remainder of the population, on the whole, are nationalists, some republicans and nearly all Roman Catholic with a distinctive regard for the South and the Republic. It is with that that we have to concern ourselves, and that is what the agreement seeks to recognise.

It is no good saying to the people in the minority that, as they are in a minority in part of the United Kingdom, they must think like us, become totally British and prefer the Union flag, not the tricolour. Those people found themselves, because of a stroke of history, north of the border, thanks to the Boundary Commission of that time

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): If the right hon. Gentleman believes that a simple majority rule is not appropriate in Northern Ireland — I can understand arguments along those lines — why should I accept, through article 1 of the agreement, that a simple majority should take me out of my citizenship of the United Kingdom and into a united Ireland?

Mr. Butler: That point is somewhere among my notes to be dealt with later. If, by some magic, there were a 51 per cent. majority today, the position would be just as bad in terms of divided communities. The fact is that a majority in favour of leaving the United Kingdom—if such a situation should ever arise—is many years away. It is important to grasp this point because it is no good the Republic of Ireland saying that it has only to wait a little while longer, or for the minority in Northern Ireland to say that it has only to wait for a little while. It must be the greatest consolation to the unionist population that it is a question not of a few years but of many decades, if at all. Therefore, the imperative is on both sides to get together to work out their future.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is not the advice of the Northern Ireland Office to all those who visit Northern Ireland that demographic changes within Northern Ireland will lead, perhaps within the next 20 years, to the nationalist population becoming the majority? Has that not been said? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Butler: I am reinforced in what I believe—that there are no such official forecasts—by the remarks of other of my hon. Friends. There are those who see a trend that will lead that way, but I re-emphasise the point that nobody, as far as I am aware, believes that a simple adverse majority — now I am a unionist — could arise within several decades, if at all.

In looking at the options that should be considered, I have in the past taken seriously the possibility of repartition, because that is the only other option if the two communities will not resolve the problems themselves. Frankly, it is not an option. Anybody who knows the demographic map of Northern Ireland knows that in every square mile of every part of the Province there is a significant minority population. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) would hardly welcome that part of Ulster going to the South. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), who is

[Mr. Butler]

not in his place at the moment, would not relish such a proposition for his constituency. I cannot imagine unionists ever wanting to give up the city of Londonderry.

Although that is not a feasible option, it is important to look at it so that it can be rejected, thus leaving the one option, which is working together. One welcomes the agreement because it recognises the fundamental character of the Province.

I follow that point one step further, in regard to the obligation on the two Governments that if a simple majority to leave the United Kingdom were achieved, those Governments would be required to lay before their Parliaments proposals for such a move. It is now in the agreement, although I would prefer that it were not. However, in that event, it would put the decision into the hands of this House, on behalf of the United Kingdom, regardless of what the proposals were, because this is where the decision should rest. We are talking about the choice not of Ulstermen, on whichever side of the divide they come, but of the British people. If I may presume to advise many of those whom I call my friends sitting on the Unionist Bench, this is why it is important to have regard to the feelings of the English, Welsh and Scottish about this affair. As others before me have said, too many are conscious of the resources that have been put into Northern Ireland and of the lives that have been lost by the Regular Army not to feel that this matter could be resolved through a united Ireland.

My last point is the one that I raised in an intervention following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's statement last Monday. No one must think that this is the tip of the iceberg or the prelude to a united Ireland. It is merely an opportunity for a step forward.

The hon. Member for Foyle was challenged from a sedentary position when he said that he was prepared to sit down and talk. If I may say so to the hon. Member for Belfast, East, it was typical of him to ask why the hon. Member for Foyle had not sat down and talked in the past. I have asked the hon. Gentleman before why he was not in the Assembly, and I am as critical as anyone of the fact that he has not been. But now that we have heard his positive statement as the leader of the constitutional nationalists, it is for the Unionist parties to accept that offer and to try to find a way forward. Only in that way can peace and stability be achieved.

6.41 pm

Mr. Roy Mason (Barnsley, Central): This accord could be the most progressive and historic step ever taken by the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom since partition—more so in the light of the many attempts and failures at constitutional change since the dissolution of Stormont and the advent of direct rule.

One must recognise the courage of the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister. This time there has been a patient build-up to an accord. Both Prime Ministers have shown foresight and courage, have recognised the majority communities within their frontiers but have been ready to accept the anticipated hostility against the proposed changes, hoping that most people will moderate with an understanding of the accord, especially with the enshrinement of the Northern Ireland Province in a nationally recognised and binding agreement between the two countries.

But one must clearly and frankly admit that within the Province there is a great deal of uncertainty laced with anxiety. There is an urgent need to quell the unease, wrath and boiling anger in unionist breasts. It is difficult for most British minds to grasp the depth of feeling among unionists that they may have been secretly betrayed by Conservative Unionist friends, and hardly any of those fears—and fears for the future—have been allayed.

There are many uncertainties and dangers inherent in this treaty. Garret FitzGerald has, with stark reality, forgone the present goal of a united Ireland, and although it is still a claim in the Irish constitution, he has diverted from the immediate nationalist aspirations of the South. That is a major concession. Dr. FitzGerald has shown courage in his search for peace. He knows that the Provisional IRA and its political wing Provisional Sinn Fein will invade his Republic with violence and politics if they make much more political headway in the north. He has been prophetic, has seen the dangers and has faced reality instead of clinging to hope.

But—this is my first concern—will this accord, once agreed, be honoured by Charles Haughey and Fianna Fail in one or two years' time? Haughey began the cross-border talks some years ago, yet opposed the deal in the Dail. He decided not to sabotage it but to wait on the sidelines, knowing full well that politically he will benefit from all the frustrations if there is no short-term success. In a year or two, he is likely to be in the ministerial conference as Taoiseach of the South. What will happen when he has to co-operate with Her Majesty's Government on harmonisation rather than pursue a united Ireland as the priority?

While this accord exists in its present form—that is, that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland until the majority of the people so decree—he is bound by it. What then? Unless much progress on security, peace and stability is made in the short term, his victory alone poses a danger to this accord. As he said in the Dail last week:

"We cannot accept . . . recognition of British Sovereignty over the North of Ireland in this agreement."

Therein lies the first danger in the not-too-distant future.

Running throughout the ministerial meetings in the last few years has been the urge to stifle the rise of Provisional Sinn Fein. That is why so much republican interference in Northern Ireland's affairs has been agreed—to pacify the green, to take politicking away from Provisional Sinn Fein and to let the minority community see that their interests are being progressed by the south and the Social Democratic and Labour party in the north. This is designed to blunt the edge of Provisional Sinn Fein campaigning.

However, there will be a high price to pay, and there are still too many uncertainties. There is to be intrusion by a foreign state—foreign in that it does not belong to the family of provinces within the United Kingdom and subject to United Kingdom law—in almost all Northern Ireland's affairs. On the political plane, the Republic will have a say in "electoral arrangements"—in other words, everything political. That will include district elections, Assembly elections and Westminster elections, and in almost every case intrusions will be seen as offsetting the natural majority in the Province by protecting and promoting the minority. Politically, that means the SDLP. We cannot effectively ban Provisional Sinn Fein, but we can isolate it. That is the objective of the political exercise, but in doing so we might as well recognise that we incur the wrath of all the Unionist parties.

On the legal front—and in spite of the Baker report only a year ago which did not recommend any major change in the Northern Ireland system—the Republic will now have an input to the entire judiciary, including the Diplock courts and juries. All the due processes of the law will be subject to southern political intrusion, and allied with that the Irish Government will also be able to put forward views on the role and composition of public bodies in Northern Ireland, including the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, the Fair Employment Agency, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Police Authority and the Police Complaints Board.

From the unionist point of view, that is seen as a frightening and sweeping intrusion by the south in Northern Ireland's affairs. Even intervention in Northern Ireland's cultural affairs, where many Orange traditions abound, is fraught with danger. There is so much of an assault on the cherished systems, traditions and culture of Northern Ireland life that one can understand the total disbelief of the unionists and their predictable reaction.

I welcome cross-border economic co-operation. That has been developing over the years, and has built on what has so far been achieved in respect of telecommunications, bridges, railways, customs, agriculture, border land drainage and so on. That is a welcome, steady blurring of the border.

Last week the Prime Minister described the accord as a two-way street, but the Province does not see it that way. It is much more a broad highway, with southern traffic invading all the affairs of the Northern Ireland state and taking away too much of Northern Ireland's identity.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Mason: I shall not give way.

The Prime Minister has paid a high price for uncertain returns. On all the varied and sensitive matters, the accord is fraught with danger and anxiety for all those in the North, not just the majority community—because if in the end the majority wrecks it, the minority will also suffer, to the glee of the bomb, bullet and Provisional Sein Fein ballot squads. It is essential for all of us who are concerned about the future of Northern Ireland — I register my concern—to examine the good and positive aspects of the accord.

First, there is no derogation of sovereignty by the Government. That is clear beyond doubt. Secondly, there is no weakening of resolve to stand by the majority. Although southern Ministers and civil servants will be greatly involved, there is no diktat, and moves on all matters will be made only by agreement and with consent. There is a binding affirmation by the United Kingdom and Irish Governments that the status of Northern Ireland will remain unchanged so long as the majority so decrees. Moreover, there is the likelihood that that will be enshrined in an international agreement deposited at the United Nations. Safeguards of that sort on an international plane have never been agreed before.

Security, more than anything else, will determine whether the accord succeeds or fails, and that means the border. It will mean co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda, and between the British and Irish Armies. We know that the Provisional IRA undoubtedly takes rest and recreation, and has its training areas in the South. Its members raid, bomb and kill in the North and then escape to a relatively safe haven in the South. Will there, therefore, be joint police board operations, covering chases across frontiers, hot pursuits across the border, helicopter patrols, Army liaison, and joint operations by the British and Irish Armies? If security co-operation, which matters most of all, is truly and seriously intended, that is what it will involve. Otherwise, the accord is a sham.

We already have the primacy of the RUC in Northern Ireland. The Ulster Defence Regiment and the Army are there to be called upon, if necessary. The Army is now almost down to its pre-1969 garrison strength. The test is to defeat the Provisional IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army, and to be seen to be succeeding. That is the key to winning the majority community for the accord.

There is not much time. Progress must be made first on that front before progress can be made on any other fronts at the intergovernmental conference. Will the South respond rapidly on the ground? Increased security means stabilising the political turbulence in the Province. In that sort of atmosphere we shall wish to see joint missions of investment seekers from North and South, side by side, addressing the United States Congress, using their influence to denounce Noraid, and acting as ambassadors for Ireland as a whole. Only if that picture is portrayed as real, can we tread the stepping stones to political harmony in the accord, to the possibilities of an inter-parliamentary arrangement, and then to devolution. That is the path that we should all wish to tread.

I do not think that there will be a united Ireland for as far as I can see, but through the measures in the accord the border can be blurred and the two communities brought gradually closer together in the various and newly proposed structures. It will take both time and the unionists' co-operation. Above all, I ask unionists to encourage security co-operation, to help the accord defeat terrorism in their land, and to be careful not to aid and abet the Provos and INLA, and to give glee to Provisional Sinn Fein by any untoward activities which will heighten sectarian strife. We all know that the terrorist forces will do their murderous damnedest to wreck the Province. They may well try to smash the accord by a sudden and increased burst of terrorist activity. They do not want Irish unity. They want to destroy all democratic institutions in the North first; and then to take on the South. I ask unionists not to give them any succour by indirect means.

The special position of the Province within the United Kingdom has been strengthened. There is no need for a unionist election campaign. We know that the majority of the majority community is disturbed, but by elevating fears of the untried to national anger, unionists may well frustrate the laundering of the accord. That may be their objective, but the chances of security co-operation and success will be damned. It will be on their heads if the bullets, the bombs and the Provisional Sinn Fein ballots increase.

That outlook will be grim and bleak for Ulstermen. I believe that the Union is safe. I plead with unionists not to provoke a British backlash, which will alienate them from the mainland. That would be worse than acceptance of the accord. It is their choice. I beg unionist leaders not to lead their people astray.

6.56 pm

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) both on his decision to resign and on his speech. There is an old saying, "Money lost, nothing lost. Honour lost, much is lost. Courage lost, all is lost." My hon. Friend has shown a sense of honour and a degree of courage beyond the call of duty, and I salute his decision. For many years as parliamentary private secretary to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, he inevitably lived in the shadow of our political life. His public decision brings him a new status. It will earn him the respect of all hon. Members, whether we agree with him or not, and our admiration.

I should next like to congratulate the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), who I am sorry to see is no longer in his place, and who is the architect of the Hillsborough agreement. It is no mean thing for the leader of a party, which represents a little more than half of the minority in the Province, to be able to convince the Governments in Dublin and London to reach such an agreement. However, I must warn him and the House that this is a fragile concept and an affair of mirrors. The nationalists are being told that the agreement is a step towards the reunification of Ireland, while the unionists are being told that it is a guarantee of their remaining in the United Kingdom. Although the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) spoke in praise of the agreement at the beginning and end of his speech, he showed clearly the difficulties that lie ahead.

The agreement is flawed in the first place—here my unionist friends will not agree with me — because it renews a commitment to devolution. It is worth recalling that Carson was against devolution. He said that he wanted the Province to be treated in exactly the same way as Scotland, Wales and England. Had it been so treated, the political division in the Province would have evolved along the same lines as it has here between Conservatives and radicals.

Stormont did many good things. It preserved law and order in the Province when the Free State, as it then was, was ravaged by revolution. It preserved law and order when the second world war came on. It was in many ways successful; but it, inevitably perhaps, put order ahead of justice. In my judgment—hon. Members will correct me if I am wrong—it froze the political confrontation into one between unionists and nationalists or republicans. It also had the unfortunate effect, since corrected, I am glad to see, of keeping the leaders of both communities in Belfast instead of sending them here where they were represented by what might be called a second eleven, distinguished though many of them were.

I cannot help thinking that when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) destroyed Stormont — I am not sure whether he was right or wrong—he had a chance to introduce what my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne called the Airey Neave proposal, to integrate the Province completely into the United Kingdom and just have one or more regional authorities. He did not do that. Instead, my noble Friend Lord Whitelaw went out to try to destroy the unionist ascendancy. He succeeded; he got two of them. I do not know whether that has been of any help from the point of view from which he set out.

He and his colleagues then went on to embark on power sharing. Power sharing is a complicated operation. I have some experience of it. I helped to devise a power-sharing constitution for Cyprus. It was an admirable constitutional bit of work. It was approved by the Greek and Turkish communities of Cyprus and by the Greek and Turkish Governments and by our Government. Look at Cyprus now. My father before me tried to introduce power sharing in India. It was broken up, with millions of dead, into three bits. Some other Minister, I forget who, tried to have power sharing in Palestine. There was an admirable power-sharing constitution in the Lebanon, but read the papers this morning or those for any other day for the past few weeks. *[Interruption.]* I do not think that Sunningdale had much chance, but whatever chance it had was killed by the introduction of the Irish dimension, which introduced an element of condominium.

We have had a little experience of condominium. We had quite a good one in the Sudan because we would not let the other codominus, the Egyptians, come into it. We had an admirable one in the New Hebrides as a result of which no attempt was made to interfere with the tribal customs of the inhabitants, not all of which would have been approved in this House had it been informed about them.

Then we came to direct rule. I must pay tribute to the right hon. Members for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) for the way in which they administered the situation. If I may say so, they did it rather better than we have. It had one important result. The leaders of the official Unionists, the Democratic Unionists and the SDLP came here. That is already a step in the right direction. Although they have mainly talked to us about Irish problems, they have been encouraged by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) to talk and to vote on other matters and some have even joined the European Parliament. That was the whole idea that Carson had at the beginning. He believed that this House should be the protector of the majority in the North against the Republic in the South and the protector of the minority in the North against the majority in the North.

People in Britain cannot sit still, particularly the civil servants. That is understandable, but there is a passion for initiative, encouraged by the United States and other elements. So we had the proposal of my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) for the Assembly. Some of us bored the pants off the House keeping hon. Members up late at night saying that that would fail. I am sorry that we kept hon. Members up late at night, but who can say that we were wrong? The Assembly has produced the most disastrous fiasco. Although the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has talked a lot about co-operation, I am not at all clear from his speech whether he is intending to join the Assembly even now. It is expensive and totally unsuccessful, and I do not see what point it has served.

My conclusion is that devolution perpetuates division and that the best chance lies in integration. The atmosphere of this House softens differences and tends to ridicule extremism. I remember well when Mrs. Braddock, of blessed memory, came into the House. I approached her once on some subject and she said that she did not talk to Tories. Two years later I found her the most garrulous and agreeable of companions. There is some chemistry in the House that operates in this way.

I cannot help thinking that the commitment to devolution, as we rejected it for Scotland and Wales, makes the inhabitants of the Province, if not second-class citizens, at least citizens of a different category. It is imposing on them a kind of dual nationality, and that is a fundamental flaw.

Then there is the flaw of the condominium. We are assured, and I believe it, that the representative of the Republic, the Minister who comes, will have only a consultative right. He will not have a right of veto or anything of that sort. But suppose that any of us was in his shoes. He is responsible to the Dail. Any question on some alleged grievance in the Province can be referred through some member of the Dail to him in his capacity as a Minister in his own Parliament. So the affairs of the Province can be discussed in the Dail almost as intimately as if the Province were part of the Republic. He will be under great pressure. As election time approaches, he will be asked what is said and whether he stood up for the rights of Mrs. Maloney, or whoever it may be. That could become serious where security is concerned.

Let us suppose that the GoC or the Chief Constable wants to adopt a new line and puts it to the conference. Let us suppose that the Republic representative does not like it. Will the Secretary of State say, "Perhaps we should be careful. The Republic does not like it." Are operations to be subject to diplomacy? Where will that lead? It is not so much that we have the right to overrule and to decide, as that there could be a reluctance on the part of the British Government to override the view of the people directly responsible for security.

My third criticism is that there is no element of reciprocity. In the United Kingdom we are deeply involved in the affairs of Northern Ireland and southern Ireland. We have a large southern Irish population. It is difficult to be sure how many Irish there are here, but they are entitled to work, enjoy our social services, vote and stand for public office. They come here because of the way in which the economy in the Republic is administered.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Amery: I know that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) knows a great many of the Irish in Liverpool.

Mr. Heffer *rose*——

Mr. Amery: I could perhaps have swallowed the agreement if it had been a step towards a reunion of the British Isles or the Anglo-Celtic isles, whatever one may like to call them, but I cannot help feeling that this is an irretraceable step towards a united Ireland. Certainly that is how our friends in the United States appear to see it.

I accept the commitment of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the union, but I would add a qualification. People are led by the calculation of their brain but also by the heart. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, like her predecessors, has reiterated many times, and several times in her statement on 18 November, the old formula that there will be no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland unless the people of the Province require it. I cannot help finding that a chilling, cold and clinical formula.

The Queen does not want any unwilling subjects, but I should like to hear the Government and the Conservative party take pride in the patriotism of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland and in the contribution that they have made in shipbuilding, aircraft building and the eight field marshals that they provided during the war out of a total of 11. I want to hear us say that, although we will not stand in the way of their joining the Republic, if that ever crosses their mind, we would do so with the greatest reluctance.

In the speeches of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, I cannot find any of the warmth that I should like to see for our association with the Province. Because I cannot find that, and because of the arguments that I have attempted to put forward in criticism of the agreement, I find it impossible to support the initiative that she has taken.

7.14 pm

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): Earlier in the debate, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said that he hoped that it would be orderly and constructive. I think that it is fair to say that it has been knowledgeable and moving, too. Indeed, the contribution by the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) was entertaining. I say that with respect to a man of experience and knowledge on the subject of partition. It makes me feel a little humble, not just because of any natural modesty, to have the opportunity to make a contribution as a Back Bencher without the vast experience or detailed knowledge of hon. Members who have contributed so far. Having been a Member of Parliament for 21 years, this is the first time that I have ever contributed to a major debate on Northern Ireland.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Or Ireland.

Mr. Brown: Yes, or Ireland. Some of my colleagues are sensitive about how I describe things.

My opportunity to make a contribution denotes something that I think the House has already shown, that there is intense interest in the subject and that we all appreciate its seriousness. The attendance in the House is the highest that I have seen for many debates in many years. Therefore, I am conscious of the fact that I have to offer something constructive.

I have no interest to declare, in that I have no family, territorial or religious connection with Ireland. I do not say that by way of pride or criticism; it is merely a statement of fact. My interest in the debate stems from a strand of thinking in the Labour movement. Some of us take some interest in the history of Ireland and the struggles of countries to achieve a national identity. I confess—perhaps it is not fashionable—that I might even have been influenced by the teachings of Lenin against imperialism. It is against that background and with some knowledge of Connolly, Larkin and some of the people who have made an enormous contribution to Irish politics, that I have something to contribute.

I think that there should be a voice from Scotland. I am not presuming to speak for Scotland. In fact, that is one of the disadvantages. Even in the parliamentary Labour party and the Northern Ireland group, of which I have been a member for many years, there are only a few Members from Scotland who even take part in discussions on Ireland. One of the things that we have to offer is that in Glasgow and the west of Scotland we understand what a Billy and Dan situation is. I shall explain that for the benefit of the unenlightened. It means that we are familiar

[Mr. Brown]

with some of the problems—they are not identical—of Catholics and Protestants, or Orangemen, to give them another description.

My contribution has some significance because in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, even the media—I make no complaint about that—accept that we have been muted in all the previous deliberations on the subject.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Brown: I see the hon. Lady nodding her head. She knows what I mean by that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) recognises this. Some hon. Members who feel strongly about the issue have kept quiet because we felt that we could not do much to solve the problem, given the expertise of so many people in the House and in Ireland, both north and south. At worst, we felt that we could stimulate discussion in our own constituencies and in areas that would do nothing to contribute to the solving of the problem. In other words, below the surface, certainly in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, there are deep feelings on both sides of the argument.

Way back in the 1970s, with a Conservative Member who is no longer in the House, I paid a private/semi-official visit to Northern Ireland. I thought that I had better consult some constituents before I went there. I used discreet sources to get at what I regarded as a representative group of people on the Catholic and on the Orange side. Needless to say, I did not meet them together. I was not really surprised but I was positively frightened at their intensity of feeling, which had never risen to the surface in any local discussions in the Labour party or at any election meeting that I had taken part in. That warned me that although things are quiet in the sense that there are no demonstrations of violence in Glasgow or the west of Scotland, there are strong feelings on both sides of the issue and, indeed, about the need to come up with a solution.

Therefore, I make no apology for taking part in the debate. I hope that I shall express what I regard as a pretty substantial point of view of ordinary people who are not always associated with my party.

I have three churlish thoughts to offer, perhaps uncharacteristically. I keep asking myself: why should a Conservative Government with a Prime Minister such as the one we have, get themselves into this situation? What is there in it for a Conservative Government? First, the Prime Minister likes to be seen as a custodian of law and order, so there is something in that argument for the Conservative party. Secondly, the Government are concerned about public expenditure, and there is the enormous cost of the subvention to Northern Ireland, so perhaps that factor comes into play. Thirdly, I even had the unflattering thought that Conservatives were thinking that if the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) has failed, perhaps the Prime Minister can do something that he did not do. I have got the venom about the Prime Minister out of my system, but let me make it clear that I intend to support the agreement and will vote for it.

The agreement is well thought out. Some of my hon. Friends are too critical and suspicious of anything that any Conservative Government do. Sometimes colleagues are afraid of being described as supporting a bi-partisan policy. That has never worried me. If I started analysing some of the occasions when there are many strange bedfellows in the same Lobby, I would never do anything unless I was sure that I was in nice, respectable company. I know that some of my hon. Friends will find extreme difficulty in going into the No lobby with some of the lot who will be in there tomorrow, but that is for them to work out.

Mr. Heffer: I am not going in with them.

Mr. Brown: It just so happens that my hon. Friend is sitting near me. I am not addressing my remarks to him in particular. There are other of my hon. Friends, and I know that they have signed an amendment. It is up to them to decide what to do.

In her statement on 18 November, the Prime Minister summed up the agreement well by saying that the principal aims and objectives were peace and conciliation linked with devolution. I do not have time, nor do I have the intention, to go into those two aspects, but devolution is important.

I agree that the ultimate aim of some sort of unification or a united Ireland is a legitimate aspiration for many people in Ireland. There is no doubt about that, and I support it. Ulster unionists' loyalty to the Crown has to be challenged. Perhaps the two arguments are irreconcilable. Perhaps there is no hope for peace or conciliation, but I suggest to the Ulster unionists that it is not enough to preach about peace and conciliation and then use the language of confrontation and, indeed, almost of war. The vocabulary is all wrong, and nothing will convince me that they genuinely want peace and conciliation.

We shall all wait to see what happens and what the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) says. He has a reputation for intellectual honesty and clarity, although sometimes when I listen to him I do not understand what he is talking about. When I understand I do not often agree with him. Nevertheless, on this occasion it will be interesting to see just what he and his colleagues hope to do, and where they are attempting to lead their followers.

We have to look for co-operation. I know that I am getting old, but I am an old-fashioned Socialist. I believe genuinely that there is something to be said for the slogan, "Workers of the world unite". I even thought in my innocence that it was a good enough argument for joining the EEC. I am in the minority in my party in holding that view. I cannot see for the life of me why there should not be an injection of some sort of co-operation between the workers on one side of the border and those on the other through the trade union movement and the labour and Socialist movements. That would be an attempt to bring people together. I want to see less of the flag waving, either the tricolour or the Union flag. Instead, I want to see genuine co-operation, which is about attempting to modify some of the discrimination that has existed and still exists against a minority population, in jobs and housing. Others can say that better than me and with more knowledge. In every part of the country, there is alienation of large groups of young people — in London, Birmingham——

Mr. Maginnis: May I tell the hon. Gentleman that Northern Ireland has been administered for the past 12 or

13 years directly from the House? Is he accusing Labour Governments as well as Conservative Governments during that time of continuing to discriminate?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) dealt with that to some extent. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is yes. We have all been guilty of allowing things to continue that should have been stopped.

Mr. Maginnis: I am not going to pay for the hon. Gentleman's discrimination.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech. I hope that I have been reasonably objective and historical in my point about discrimination. No one can deny that it took place.

There is another factor — the alienation of many young people throughout the United Kingdom. I am not trying to make a party point, but let us face it, when I see youngsters, whether on the Orange or Catholic side, I see that some are just young hooligans and thugs. However much I understand the causes that give rise to such behaviour, I believe that the problem will not be solved merely by a constitutional agreement, however much I support it. The Government, who uphold society, are incapable of solving the economic problems in Northern Ireland, let alone those of Scotland or any other part of the United Kingdom. That factor must be considered when studying the agreement.

Will the Minister tell the House where the economic assistance is to come from? I hope that it will not come directly from the United States. My gut reaction is that any assistance would be better if it came from some international agency such as the United Nations, although I do not know whether that body has any funds to dish out. If there is good will and a case is made for assistance, that aid would come better from the EC, because the United States is politically provocative to many hon. Members. I shall not go into the details, and I hope that I am not misunderstood on that point. Where is the international financial aid to come from?

I am not one of the diplomats who were involved in drawing up the agreement. I did not have to work out the fine detail, but I believe that there is long-term merit in the proposition that there should be some inter-parliamentary getting together. Social and cultural relations are also important. I would willingly play golf for the parliamentary team anywhere in Ireland, north or south, if that would enhance the opportunity to establish good relations. Sometimes we under-estimate the contribution of social and cultural exhanges.

This is not a priority, but I hope that there will be a general recognition that many hon. Members, who have no axe to grind in terms of votes or influence and power-seeking, can play a modest role in achieving what I believe to be the aim of us all—a more peaceful Ireland.

7.33 pm

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): I share the interest of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) in Irish history. The hon. Gentleman mentioned James Connolly, who said that when St. Patrick got the snakes out of Ireland, they went to America and became Irish-Americans. I notice that the hon. Gentleman had some suspicion of a transatlantic hand in the agreement.

When the agreement was concluded at Hillsborough, the Prime Minister reaffirmed her devotion to the unionist cause, and I believe her. The agreement is not so much a crime as a blunder.

I recall with sadness the occasion when Airey Neave and I accompanied my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, then Leader of the Opposition, on her first visit to Belfast. At that time, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) was associated with Airey Neave and me. His was the definitive unionist speech in this debate, and I salute him. On that occasion in Belfast I remember how my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was rapturously received in quarters of the city that are now heavy with reproach, foreboding and bitter anger.

The thousands who marched on city hall on Saturday were not only the militant loyalist workers of shipyard and factory. Many of them were outraged business and professional people and clergy, several of whom are known to me and to my hon. Friends. Some would have been backers of Terence O'Neill and Brian Faulkner, but they have never warmed to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). They are quiet, not strident, men, and they are the salt of Ulster.

The Prime Minister will know of the anguished dissent, not merely of the Free Presbyterians but of the Presbyterian Church of Ireland and of other religious bodies. The Alliance party of Northern Ireland, so impeccably moderate, is split, and in the wings stand the paramilitaries. We have had a period of considerable success against terrorism. The right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) told us that the armed forces in Northern Ireland are now almost down to the garrison strength that prevailed before the troubles. I only hope that our soldiers and the Royal Ulster Constabulary will not now find themselves between two fires.

This flawed agreement comes as a diktat, and it will be passed by the House with a tremendous majority. Whatever the verdict of Parliament and the courts, which have disposed so easily of the terms of the Act of Union, an agreement thus thrust upon us seems morally a suitable matter for a Northern Ireland referendum on the partial analogy of Welsh and Scottish devolution. Were that referendum to be granted, I should not wish to divide against the Government.

Despite what the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central said, I shall not cry hallelujah because once again the Irish Government have recognised, de facto, that Northern Ireland forms part of the United Kingdom. The permanence of the border was the subject of the tripartite declaration of 1925, referred to by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux). That instrument was deposited with the League of Nations, as this agreement is to be registered at the United Nations. There was also Sunningdale in 1973.

The agreement is not a treaty. It is a question of interesting municipal and international law: which has stronger force, article 1 of the Hillsborough agreement or articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution? If that constitution were to be amended and those articles removed, that would do great good, as would the adherence of the Republic to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) said that the adhesion of the Republic to the

[Sir John Biggs-Davison]

European convention was an advantage of the agreement. However, that is not in the agreement; it is only the intention of a transient Taoiseach.

Southern Irish politicians can now claim, and are claiming, that the agreement embodies at least a variant of the third option that was proposed in the report of the New Ireland Forum and counted out by the Prime Minister. The Leader of the Opposition said that the agreement was a matter of consultation and no more. Those were the words I noted down when he addressed the House earlier in the debate. According to Dr. FitzGerald, it provides for "as near joint authority as can be". I have supported the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and I would support the parliamentary tier to which the hon. Member for Provan referred. Perhaps our debate could continue in that forum if it were set up. But this agreement is a dangerous distortion of the intergovernmental principle.

I heard my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State — the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) — in a television panel of which I was a member, describe the agreement as "definitive". Is it? Others regard it differently. They regard it as a foothold, as part of a process—as the first sour sip from a bitter cup.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I shall give way this once, but I do not wish to take too much time, because many hon. Members wish to address the House.

Mr. Butterfill: My hon. Friend said that some regard the agreement as a foothold. In the Dail debate, Deputy Lyons said:

"The agreement reinforces British shackles."

Not all in the Irish Republic regard the agreement in the same light as my hon. Friend suggests.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I do not know who uttered those words, but I suspect that he is——

Mr. Butterfill: Deputy Lyons of Fianna Fail.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: No doubt on the extreme wing thereof.

When we were waiting for this agreement, unconsulted and uninformed, save by leak and rumour, I took courage from the words of the Sinn Fein president, Mr. Gerry Adams MP, speaking at his party conference in Dublin on 3 November. *The Irish Times* stated:

"Mr. Adams compared reports about an Anglo-Irish settlement with a report published by the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, entitled 'Britain's Undefended Frontier—A Policy for Ulster'."

That is the title I gave it. The article continues:

"The report, he said, suggested a joint London-Dublin security commission, including a military sub-committee with representatives from both forces; a fulltime secretariat drawn from Dublin and Whitehall civil servants; and governmental summits at fixed intervals."

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), who is a signatory of the amendment which the Chair did not accept, and I contributed to that booklet. We were extremely grateful for the commercial from Mr. Gerry Adams. But, alas, Mr. Adams' fears that this was what would happen were exaggerated, because the Intergovernmental Conference is different. It is not machinery for the reciprocal discussion of cross-border questions. The Taoiseach makes no secret of the fact that the agreement lacks symmetry — those are his words—and goes well beyond consultation.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): On the question of cross-border co-operation, there is total symmetry and total reciprocity.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: In that case, I hope that we shall soon see realised the improvements in cross-border security mentioned by the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central. If that happens, I shall be the first to congratulate those responsible.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery), I refer to article 4 of the agreement, which contains yet another wearisome call for devolution "on a basis which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community."

Article 4 contains Dublin's backing for this, which is a matter for internal policy. It is easy to understand why Dublin and the SDLP want power-sharing devolution and why they are pleased that it is in the agreement. Power-sharing devolution would drive a wedge of difference between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and that is seen as a stage on Ulster's way out of the United Kingdom and into a united Irish Republic. But to talk of such acceptance is futile, because the majority rejects power sharing, save in local government, and the minority insists that if there is to be devolved Government, there must also be power sharing.

If the Province is to be allowed to settle down and if the terrorists are to be deprived of the hope of success which spurs and sustains them, Northern Ireland must be governed as truly part of the United Kingdom, and not tricked out with fancy constitutional devices that set it apart. Let there be the fullest administrative devoluton as there is to Cardiff and Edinburgh. I know that Northern Ireland is different. Wales and Scotland are different from England and from each other. Indeed, Scotland is more different, because it has its own legal and judicial system.

Yes, Northern Ireland is different and divided, but, contrary to the conventional unwisdom, that is why Northern Ireland is unsuitable for legislative devolution. Devolution is divisive. The minority is safer under the rule of Westminster; that is the lesson of Stormont. When Stormont was abolished, the hon. Member for Antrim, North assured me that it would never be restored. Westminster's rule has been found to divide Northern Ireland least. The celebrated priest, Father Denis Faul, says that Catholics in Northern Ireland would rather be under Westminster than under the hon. Member for Antrim, North and people of that sort.

The communiqué mentions the two major traditions in Ireland and the identification of religious faith with political allegiance. Let us be careful about over-simplification. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne warned the House about that. The picture of two communities—one Protestant, loyalist and British and the other Catholic, Gaelic and Irish—is false. A staunch unionist lady, fearful of British intentions, once said to me, "The trouble with you English is that you do not want us Irish to remain British."

Northern Ireland should not be patronisingly treated like some exotic colony with its troublesome tribes. It should be regarded and administered as truly part of the United Kingdom.

Hon. Members have referred to the Northern Ireland Assembly. I should have thought that those responsible for the Assembly would have kept quiet about it. It has turned out just as we who opposed the Bill predicted. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and Unionists debate matters in this House, but they will not debate matters in the Northern Ireland Assembly because the SDLP will not take part in it.

I refer again to the remarks of the hon. Member for Provan and to something that was said by the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) when questioning the Prime Minister on her statement on Tuesday. The hon. Gentleman recalled that sectarian conflict had been killed on Merseyside, in Liverpool and in his constituency because Catholics there had the same liberties as the Protestant majority. I interjected, "And the same Parliament." The hon. Gentleman echoed, "And the same Parliament." The liberties that prevail in the United Kingdom are enjoyed throughout Northern Ireland today under the supremacy of this Parliament.

I am told that Northern Ireland is about the size of Yorkshire. It is narrow ground. In 1825, Sir Walter Scott wrote of Ireland's "envenomed" factions

"having so little ground to fight their battle in that they are like people fighting with daggers in a hogshead."

We must end provincial pump politics. Bring the political battles to Westminster and let the poison out.

7.49 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): My right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said that the Irish Prime Minister, Garret FitzGerald had forgone the claim to a united Ireland in his eagerness to have this agreement. That no longer meant anything, although it was still in the Irish constitution.

That was one of my great fears. I struggled to overcome it and return to the old Labour party policy because, in the past, the Labour party had a policy for a united Ireland. It later adopted a so-called bi-partisan policy which did not support a united Ireland. Many hon. Members fought a long battle to try to change that policy and to win the Labour party over to the policy of a united Ireland. That was a real struggle, but we finally achieved it. I want that achievement to be not merely a line in a policy statement but something that is striven and fought for and a fundamental part of the Labour party's policy for Ireland.

After considering the agreement and the sense of urgency that pervaded the discussions, I thought that a situation might arise—a situation that I fear—in which the Labour party merely intoned the line about a united Ireland. Therefore, I gave the agreement careful consideration and worried over it before I concluded that I should have to oppose it because I do not think that it is workable.

The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) made a fine speech today and I profoundly agreed with most of it. He told me that it could not be wrong for us to be talking on these matters. Long before the hon. Member for Foyle came to the House, I argued passionately for talks to take place with the Republic of Ireland. I want agreement to come from such talks, but I do not want the agreement that we are discussing today because it is premature and not properly thought out.

My reasons for being fearful of the agreement are different from those of most hon. Members. In general the Tory party is in favour of the agreement. The Government have made it clear that they are not in favour of a united Ireland and they try to win the unionists over by telling them that it is clear that they will not support a united Ireland unless one day it is united by common consent.

That is also the Labour party's policy and I abide by it, but I do not want the killing to continue until there is a Catholic majority. I want to try to stop the killing. The policy of the Labour party is for a united Ireland, and I believe that that must be striven for. I do not want to placate people by saying, "You can go along with this. It will not involve a united Ireland because different people are saying different things." I want to make it absolutely clear that the policy of the Labour party is for a united Ireland and I shall worry about anything that militates against that policy and is therefore not progressive.

I was rather worried as I listened to the mollifying and conciliatory speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), until he explained why things had gone wrong in Ireland. Immediately he did that, there were rumbles from the Tory Benches. As long as there seemed to be a bond in the House on that matter, everything was sweetness and light, but as soon as my right hon. Friend made his fundamental points about the poverty, lack of housing, and all the other terrible things, grumbles emerged from the Tories, trying to convey the impression that they had never done anything wrong in Ireland.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) expressed it very neatly in his speech of apology for giving up his post, when he said that the agreement did not have the consent of the majority in Northern Ireland. The majority of all the people of Ireland were not consulted before the line was drawn across Ireland and Northern Ireland was separated by force from the Republic. The original Irish became a minority in a situation in which, according to the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), the unionist majority were not really anti-democratic, did not do anything wrong and never deprived the minority of housing. As the hon. Member for Foyle said, out of 100 representatives there was only one Catholic on the council. The minority still exists. In reality, the unionists still regard as their enemies not just the IRA but the minority community in Northern Ireland which has been mistreated for so long.

During the long years of British occupation Ireland could not be ruled without force. It was a land of constant revolt against an imperialist force which had stolen the land from its owners. Often those revolts were led by Protestants like Wolfe Tone. *[Laughter.]* The Unionists are laughing at my serious points, but it is a nervous laugh because they know that what I am saying is true. They know about the rebellion of 1798 and what happened in Galway and Mayo. They know who Robert Emmet was just as well as I do.

What is now called Northern Ireland was brought about by force and has never been ruled by consent. It has always been ruled by force against the minority community. James Connolly prophesied in 1912 that the voices who wanted to split up Ireland would reap the whirlwind. The whirlwind has come, and our task is to stop it becoming worse.

Ireland was the first example of British imperialism and it will undoubtedly be the last. What would have happened if an imperialist Ireland had taken over Britain and eventually left but clung on to Lancashire? Obviously the

[Mr. Martin Flannery]

British would have something to say in such a situation. That situation is similar to the Falklands but it would be a lot worse. The partition of Ireland, and the creation of the border was a disaster from the beginning and it has created a whirlwind. It was a mistake which some people are trying to rectify, but that attempt sticks in the craw of others.

Successive Ministers have constantly said that things were improving in Northern Ireland, but the reality is that a short time ago something happened to show that they were not. The solution is still a united Ireland. Nobody has ever asked the Irish people whether they wanted to be ruled by Britain. Their country was taken from them.

If I thought that the Anglo-Irish agreement could begin to solve this terrible and intractable problem, I would vote for it, but I believe it to be a desperate and partly spurious measure. I am more than eager to be proved wrong—I hope that I am wrong—but I am fearful because when I have said previously what I am saying now I have regretted it and been in the minority in the Labour party. I hope I am wrong, and I hope that the agreement will lead to a peaceful solution and will not destroy the Labour party's idea of a united Ireland.

How did the agreement come about and what precipitated it? For years in this Chamber after 1969 all but a small minority of hon. Members said, "Let Sinn Fein go to the ballot box; they will not get any votes." Sinn Fein went to the ballot box and that caused a stir and a fluttering. When I was in southern Ireland a year ago after visiting Northern Ireland, I talked with southern Irish leaders. They were horrified at Sinn Fein's share of the vote. They had thought that Sinn Fein would not get a single vote.

I, too, believed for a time that Sinn Fein would never get any votes, but in fact it took a large number of votes from the SDLP, moving towards a section of the Irish people who did not think that their interests were being dealt with properly. We were all wrong and there was deep worry both here and in southern Ireland. That is what has precipitated this premature agreement. The development a year ago which has returned even stronger than before has precipitated an agreement characterised by a note of desperation that most people will not acknowledge. People who are desperate to reach an agreement will sometimes accept an agreement which strikes at their own fundamental beliefs.

Mr. Winnick: I have great respect for my hon. Friend's work on Northern Ireland matters, but does he agree that, however many votes Sinn Fein has gained, it remains a minority within a minority in Northern Ireland? Does he also agree that some of its more recent electoral gains are undoubtedly due to the economic conditions described by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition and do not necessarily represent an endorsement of armed struggle?

Mr. Flannery: I entirely agree. For whatever reason, those votes were cast, but there is more to it than that. I believe that my original proposition is profoundly true. People felt that no one was helping them towards a united Ireland. On my first visit to southern Ireland I was at a dinner with Conor Cruise O'Brien, who eventually went to *The Observer* and now seems to have left the scene altogether. He told me that Northern Ireland was not an issue and explained why he held that view. It may not have been an issue to him, but it is now a monumental issue to the parties in Northern Ireland, the parties in southern Ireland and the British Parliament, and Mr. O'Brien has gone the way of those who do not recognise real issues. We now have to do something about that issue.

The Prime Minister calls herself a unionist and a loyalist. She seems to have told the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) something slightly different from what she has told other people, but no doubt they can iron that out between them. In my view, however, the agreement will not further the cause of peace because it is bound to fail. Indeed, it may result in the polarisation of the two communities in Northern Ireland. I sincerely hope that that will not be the result, but we are walking a very dangerous tightrope with a precipitate agreement in a situation fraught with danger for all concerned and especially for the people who have lived through 16 years of misery in Northern Ireland.

The agreement strengthens the border. It makes the policy of a united Ireland more difficult because it gives the border a spurious legitimacy and almost entrenches it in international law. Although it does not say so, I believe that it is a quirky, oblique return almost to a bipartisan policy in which the struggle against the border could be submerged by plausible agreements and plausible arguments. It tackles the consequences of partition, but it is only a palliative and leaves the real cause of strife untouched.

The amendment in my name refers to "British military presence since", but that does not mean that I want to pull out the troops. I believe that there are more troops than my right hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) suggests, but no doubt the Minister can clarify that. I believe that the troops should be withdrawn only by agreement and when the situation is such that their withdrawal will not precipitate a Lebanon in Ireland. That is very important to me.

The idea of a referendum brings great joy to the hearts of Ulster Unionists because they regard themselves as sure of victory.

Mr. McCusker: No, we do not.

Mr. Flannery: The unionists say that that is not so, but in fact it is so. That is how they have behaved through all the weary years in which the minority community has been held in subjection. To the unionists, democracy means assurance of victory. That is not what democracy means here. Democracy presupposes the right of a minority to become a majority, but that fact has never struck the unionists. If the matter is left to them and their referendums, the problem will go on for another 30 years.

Mr. McCusker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Flannery: No, I want to finish now.

There is no likelihood whatever of a minority becoming a majority in a referendum in Northern Ireland and the unionists know that. That is why they want a referendum. Their idea of a referendum is a veto on democracy.

The unionists are keen to have a referendum. They are always shouting about how they want to belong to the United Kingdom for ever more, although they often seem to regard it as a separate country from Northern Ireland which in turn is a separate country from southern Ireland. Yet they refuse the real democracy of the rest of the United

Kingdom. They want only tribal, communalist voting. I saw plenty of that in India during the war. We knew that in some areas the Moslems would always win and in others the Hindus would always win because real democracy had not yet prevailed. That is the kind of pseudo-democracy that the unionists love, but it is not democracy at all.

I believe that the deadliest enemy of terrorism is democracy, not the gun. Where democracy flourishes, nobody takes to the gun except a few villains who want to rob people. Where there is democracy, terrorism has no base. For too long the Ulster Unionist tail has wagged the Westminster dog. Whenever a British Government, of whichever political persuasion, were determined to do something, the unionists had only to say, "If you do that we shall be on the streets." We all know what happened to the Sunningdale agreement. It was smashed in exactly that way. Catholics could not get to work because the unionists came out on to the streets, and they may well try to do it again.

Let those who want a referendum have a referendum —a referendum of the entire United Kingdom. Let us invite all our people to vote on the matter. If the result was in favour of withdrawal, I should object strenuously to that being put into operation immediately. I am as confident of winning a United Kingdom referendum as the unionists are confident of winning a Northern Ireland referendum, but I would want the decision taken to form the backcloth for prolonged discussion before any final decision was taken about Northern Ireland.

I believe that unless something is done on the lines that I have suggested the killing will go on and in 30 years' time we shall still be discussing what is to be done. Moreover, if by that time the Catholics are the majority in Northern Ireland, I am sure that the unionists will not accept democracy on that basis.

8.10 pm

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) does not have Hillsborough in his constituency for nothing, and it is ironic that his speech was a strong argument in favour of the agreement.

I strongly appreciate the Hillsborough agreement and pay a warm tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for her tenacity and courage in carrying it through. The reaction of the unionists in the North is sad, although predictable. Like many other hon. Members who have spoken, I hope that they will reconsider their position, and especially whether they will offer themselves for election. I fear that such action will exacerbate matters in the United Kingdom and drive a further wedge between themselves and the great mass of people in this country.

It is only through the co-operation of the two communities in Ulster and of the Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland that terrorism will be defeated. There are two inescapable facts which, though they are self-evident, tend to be overlooked. The first is that the communities are divided by almost everything — politics, religion and culture. One acknowledges the Union Jack, the other the Irish tricolour. One may see similar situations in countries such as Cyprus, Belgium or Israel. I do not intend to talk about those countries' Governments, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery). They have been created by history, and we cannot overturn history overnight. Dr. Fitzgerald said in the Dail that this agreement provides the opportunity to

"remove the alienation of one community and to still the fears of the other."

That is the task before us.

Terrorism, it has been said, can be defeated by denying the terrorists a base. It can be done by counter-terror, which the German occupation forces attempted in the last war. That is a repugnant action and out of the question for any civilised state. The only alternative is persuasion. We must have a hearts and minds campaign. We must persuade the harbourers of terrorists that they have a stake in removing the terror. The harbourers of terrorists are not in the constituencies of the hon. Members opposite but in the minority community. The success of this agreement will be judged by its achievements in the reduction of terrorism and violence. This agreement does not please everybody—although to displease such opposites as Mr. Haughey and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) is a good augury.

It is a remarkable agreement. It has produced, for the first time, an acknowledgement by the Republic of the right of the majority to decide their own future. This is of the utmost significance, and I always thought it had long been demanded by unionists. The sovereignty of their position remains intact. My constituents detest the IRA and the IRA will never force Ulster out of the United Kingdom, but I must say that the loyalists could quickly change that.

I pay tribute to the courage of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), although I do not agree with his views. He quoted a number of letters that he has received. I intervened during questions on the Prime Minister's statement on Monday and was surprised by the number of letters I received not just from my constituents but from people everywhere. I have two examples here:

"I do not wish to pay taxes to support the Northern Irish."

"I am sure that I voice the feelings of many people in this country when I say that I am heartily sick of sending our young men to Northern Ireland to be injured, maimed and killed in defence of people like Paisley and his thugs".

The loyalists must realise that the country as a whole is interested in getting this agreement right. They must know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minster and her colleagues are not traitors. They are good people trying to find a solution to the problem. The country recoils from the bigotry of some hon. Members. The longer I live the more I am convinced that hatred never wins. It produces a counter-reaction. Only reconciliation offers any hope. I admit that it is easy for me to say this in the security of this House, and, indeed, this country. It is not easy to say such things in the polarised attitudes of Ulster. But this agreement must come.

Article 12 concerns the parliamentary tier. I appreciate all the difficulties, but I urge that this should be set up immediately. It is essential to provide the necessary staff so it may operate efficiently. I hope it will not be too ambitious initially. I think that it should start by considering policy which is relatively uncontroversial, but where co-operation between the two countries can produce great benefits for Northern Ireland. It is important to strengthen the ties between Westminster and Dublin. We need to know each oher much better because so much is at stake, and we have an overriding common interest in combating and defeating terrorism.

[Mr. W. Benyon]

There will be many who will seek to wreck this agreement. However, the agreement has the support of many in this House and, indeed, throughout the country. That support will encourage the Government in their difficult task.

8.17 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I do not believe that the Anglo-Irish treaty is only worthy of criticism because it is a bad agreement. It is an evil thing conceived from a clandestine relationship, in which there is an element of deceit. It is born to betray and it will have to be sustained on a diet of untruths, half-truths and ultimately blood sacrifices.

Unlike some of my colleagues, I do not find it easy to absolve those people who brought about this agreement, be they the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or the Foreign Secretary, because the result of their ill-conceived and wrong intentions will be that many of my constituents will die. I have to be as blunt as that.

Perhaps I feel better able than some to speak because I am closer to the sharp edge. I represent a frontier constituency where the terrorists come across from the Irish Republic. Indeed, in the last 10 days a father and husband, aged 45, was shot by the terrorists and it looks as though he will be confined to a wheelchair.

I have watched the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's pathetic efforts to justify this agreement during the past 10 days. His shoddy tactic has been to try to discredit people such as me, my colleagues and those we represent by alleging that we have arrived at a conclusion about the agreement without reading it. He has also suggested incorrectly, as have others — Saturday's demonstration in Belfast should put the lie to it—that there is an element of violence underlying our opposition. Both allegations are wildly inaccurate, to say the least.

Everybody knows that details of the agreement were publicised in the Irish Republic's press two days before the Hillsborough signing. We queried such reports during Northern Ireland Question Time on Thursday 14 November. They caused several Northern Ireland Office Ministers and the Prime Minister to employ every device and quibble to imply that what I and my colleagues were saying was incorrect. We turned out to be absolutely right. The Government's performance was utterly unworthy.

Even earlier information came out in Dublin. Although we suspected betrayal, we felt that democracy would reign in this place. Could the Government really ignore the democratically elected representatives of more than 70 per cent. of the Ulster community? In case it appears that I am wise after the event, I should like to quote from an article that I wrote for a newspaper two weeks before the Conservative party conference:

"The Prime Minister and her Government are about to surrender to the demands of the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland by allowing the Irish Republic a 'say' in the affairs of the United Kingdom . . . Northern Ireland, so the Irish Republic asserted, was not only to be overseen by an Anglo-Irish Council of Ministers but was to have an Anglo-Irish secretariat installed in Belfast. Does anyone believe that Ulster Unionists could possibly be persuaded to accept a wooden horse like this in their midst in return for the offer of a juicy 'devolution' carrot?

The real crunch of course is that John Hume and Charles Haughey are already signalling that this deal is not enough. It is, they say, just a foot in the door to a united Ireland. Ulster Unionists understand exactly the point they are making. Meanwhile the IRA looks on without emotion . . . its declared interest in politics is merely to use the council chambers to promote and endorse further killing, irrespective of any concessions."

So much for the Secretary of State's allegation that we prejudged the agreement. I wonder whether the right hon. Gentleman thought that he was dealing with dummies and that when he went conspiring behind our backs we were incapable of finding out the truth. The three short paragraphs of the newspaper article that I have quoted proved all too accurate. In the first six days after the agreement, the IRA killed three people in separate shooting incidents. Two of the victims were Roman Catholics.

When I tell the House that it will regret this agreement, I am sorry, again, but I know that I shall be proved right. The way in which the elected representatives of Ulster in this House have been patronised disturbs and angers me most. I listened today to the hon. Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) lecturing us on the outcome of the agreement. Implicit in what he said was the threat that, if we do not concur, we shall be to blame for the violence that is bound to continue irrespective of what happens—the violence that our Government have not been capable of dealing with during the past 15 years. He is the type of person who, when we talk of loyalty, asks, "Loyal to what?" I call myself not a loyalist but an Ulster Unionist. That is the name of my party. I do not have to call myself a loyalist because I do not believe that my loyalty is in doubt. However, when loyalty is mentioned, hon. Members often ask us, "Loyal to what?"

Perhaps I can tell the House to what I am loyal. I am loyal, as my forebears have been, to the British way of life. If that has meant putting on a uniform to defend the values in which I believe, I have put on a uniform, as did my forebears. If loyalty means looking after my constituents, I can only hope that I have proved my loyalty to all of my constituents — 54 per cent. of whom are members of the so-called minority Roman Catholic community. They believe that I am loyal to them because they come to me just as my Protestant constituents come to me. I work for them just as I work for my Protestant constituents. My colleagues do the same for their constituents, irrespective of their religious or political persuasion.

Implicit in what some hon. Members have said today is the suggestion that we intend violence towards those people. When will hon. Members get it into their heads that all of those people in Belfast on Saturday—I cannot say all, how could I, but the vast majority, 99 per cent. of them — are ordinary decent mainly working-class people. We are not as class conscious in Ulster as people are on this side of the water, but what are commonly called middle class and establishment people were also present on Saturday, in surprising numbers. They are decent people who are deeply worried about the agreement that has been foisted on us.

As for the performance of Northern Ireland Office Ministers and the dash to the United States made by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott), what was the justification for the unseemly haste to report to old Uncle Sam even before Parliament had had an opportunity to ratify the agreement? Who is the monkey and who is the organ grinder? Let the Prime Minister or one of her Ministers tell the House what role

the United States has played in the plot. It obviously could not have involved the Ptarmigan contract, so what price have the Government paid for this sell-out?

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Chelsea is not in the Chamber to hear what I have to say, but it is a pity that he never seemed to display the same urgency and enthusiasm when it came to security — security which means life or death to my constituents. Such sterling efforts might have meant much more if they had been directed towards keeping 19 murderers in the Maze prison. But then the current story is that the hon. Gentleman probably visits the United States more often that he visits the prisons in his charge.

I should draw attention to the phrase "views and proposals" that is in the agreement. The Irish Government are to be allowed to put forward to the conference their "views and proposals". The phrase appears again and again. Let us assume that "views" relates to consultations. What then, does the word "proposals" suggest? It does not strike me as something that is merely consultative when I read in article 2*(b)*:

"Determined efforts shall be made through conference to resolve any differences".

Surely that means that a reasonable number of proposals from the Government of the Irish Republic will have to be accepted. An analogy can be drawn with a coalition. Let us suppose that after the next election the Conservatives are in coalition with the SDP——

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): Serve them right.

Mr. Maginnis: Let us also be malevolent and assume that the Tories are the senior partners in that coalition. Proposals would be put forward by the SDP and the Tory party and a compromise would be reached in which many of each side's proposals would be accepted. Of course, the decision about which proposals to accept would be presented by the chief executive or by the senior party in the coalition. Is that not exactly what this agreement is? It is a coalition—joint authority.

Thus, through conference, in a thinly disguised way, the Irish Republic has been given an executive role in Ulster's affairs. I do not see any great rush to reassure me, but in case there is I ask hon. Members to consider what other meaning there could be and why Garret FitzGerald agrees with me that his Government have a role which is "more than consultative". Therefore, Northern Ireland's status has already been significantly changed without the consent of the majority.

Incidentally, I wonder what the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has to offer. During the past 10 days he has been repeatedly asked what he intends to do now that he has got this great concession. He has been asked whether he intends to enter the Northern Ireland Assembly. Personally, I do not think it matters whether he does or not, because we are not listened to there any more than we are here, but if he wants to have a meaningful relationship with the majority, he should think about attending.

It is disturbing that the hon. Gentleman has not said what he intends to do about recognising the RUC. He made a strange and moving speech full of clichés. It did not say anything, but it sounded quite promising. I did pick up the suggestion that, when the conference met, it would carefully consider supporting the police forces. I wonder whether I shall be reassured that there will not be any tinkering with the RUC so that it is divided into county or sub-county forces, so that we have what the IRA has been asking for for some time — a police force that is specially developed to patrol South Armagh. The IRA would not be prepared to shoot at such a police force and we all know what sort of police force it would be.

I notice that special efforts are to be made to encourage members of the minority community to join the police force. I know many members of that community who are in the police force. I have served with them, and admired them because they are tremendously courageous. They are picked out for assassination just as Catholic members of the UDR are. They are our bravest men in uniform. However, I wonder whether they are about to be betrayed. I hope not.

Mr. Alton: I very much endorse what the hon. Gentleman has said, but does he not agree that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) probably meant that there should be much greater co-operation between the Garda and the RUC? Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a tragedy that John Hermon and Lawrence Wren have not had a closer working relationship?

Mr. Maginnis: I was first in the security forces in 1958 and I know that there was then a terrific working relationship across the frontier which had existed for many years in parallel operations. When such operations involve proper liaison there is no need for joint working groups between the police forces. However, I do not wish to pursue that point.

Article 2 clearly gives conference a right to deal with security and other related matters. That means that another Government are being given an opportunity to deal with a reserved matter—a right that will be denied to British citizens living in Northern Ireland even if they are members of a devolved administration or Members of Parliament. Having served in the security forces for about 17 years, I am not allowed to know anything about security or to involve myself in it, but another Government are to have that right.

A glaring deceit is evident in article 9, where conference is given the right to draw up a programme covering the full organisational role of the RUC, including "operational resources". We are told that

"Conference shall have no operational responsibilities";

but that is meaningless. How can the Chief Constable possibly be said to have operational independence when conference controls his resources? The double deceit is that this is cloaked under the heading of "cross-border co-operation", but the matter of operational resources, including RUC manpower and all military personnel working in support of the police, is dealt with on an all-Ulster basis. There is no separate border force, so the influence of conference and hence of the Irish Government will, de facto, be Provincewide.

Mr. Butterfill: It appears that Mr. Haughey does not share the hon. Gentleman's view. In the debate in the Dail he said:

"It is also our view that the Agreement will lead the Irish Government into an impossible political situation in which they will find themselves assuming responsibility for actions and becoming involved in situations, particularly in the security field, over which they will have no control."

Mr. Maginnis: Of course, neither I nor the hon. Gentleman should expect Mr. Haughey to say anything else. He will renegotiate the agreement as soon as he is in

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power, and as he is 10 or 15 points ahead at the moment we can assume that he will be in power after the next election.

It should be remembered that, on cross-border security co-operation, the Chief Constable of the RUC voiced some criticism at the time of the Killeen bombings. That criticism was not of the professional police in the Garda, but of the lack of resources deployed by the Republican Government. He recently repeated that criticism in the United States. That immediately evoked a bitter response from Dublin and calls were made for Sir John Hermon to be sacked. Dublin claimed that it was doing all that it could to combat terrorism. If that is so, Dublin has nothing further to offer. If it could do more, it is not the good neighbour that it is made out to be in the preamble to the agreement.

Why would a so-called good neighbour wait for 16 years before meeting its obligation to deal with terrorists operating from and returning to its terrority?

The House should remember that more than 100 of my constituents have been murdered in my border constituency, which does not endow me with any great confidence in the Irish Republic. It has traditionally been a haven for the IRA, and traditionally has glorified that organisation. It is significant that one of the first undertakings given by Mr. Noonan, the Minister for Justice, following the signing of the agreement was that no more cross-frontier roads should be cratered. We cratered unapproved cross-frontier roads to hinder terrorists wanting easy access to murder our constituents. Therefore, the House will understand why I am not reassured by the agreement.

It was, of course, the same Mr. Noonan who stated on American television and radio that Dublin's role was substantial, not merely advisory. He said:

"so, in effect, we have been given a major and substantial role in the day-to-day running of Northern Ireland."

Whose version of the agreement is correct — this Government's or the Irish Republic's?

Will right hon. and hon. Members accept from me that, if the agreement causes confusion at this stage, it will not be long before it causes chaos, and chaos costs lives. It will add to the 2,460 deaths and the 27,772 injuries of the past 16 years.

On Saturday, 200,000 men and women thronged the streets of Belfast to show their opposition to the agreement. They were not bigots or extremists, but ordinary citizens who wanted nothing more than an end to the violence. They would not lightly or irresponsibly throw away an opportunity for peace—yet they know, as I know, that the agreement cannot bring other than more tragedy to their lives.

Surely neither the Prime Minister nor the lately arrived Secretary of State, who mocks the working class of the Shankill road in such a scandalous and arrogant manner, can believe that they alone know what is best. Have they forgotten that Ulster people have lived for more than 50 years in comparative peace?

The humorous mythology of the hon. Member for Sheffied, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) is nothing but a fairy story. It will not be possible to please the Irish Republic. While Garret Fitzgerald may be prepared to accept a reduction of 2,000 in the establishment of the UDR, Charlie Haughey knows that it is a con trick because the UDR has been running at more than 2,000 below strength for many years. Such a move will not impress the Irish Republic, and will cause only misunderstanding and concern in the regiment. It will please no one.

Similarly, the release of a significant number of prisoners serving sentences under the Secretary of State's pleasure will—although I welcome it—be recognised as having nothing to do with the agreement. The releases have been in the pipeline for some time and are overdue. Once again, the fact that those young men will be used as political pawns to enhance the agreement will be deeply resented.

The Anglo-Irish agreement was devised without any input from the 70 per cent. of the Ulster population who wish to remain within the Union. It will not have the co-operation, let alone the approval, of that 70 per cent. As a person who has spent his life upholding the merits of our democratic system, I wonder whether the House will abandon its principles and deny Ulster its democratic right to a referendum on the agreement.

The democratic system is not ideal, but it is known to be the best. I hope that the House will recall that in 1973, when those imperfect democratic structures were dismantled in Ulster, politicians were pushed to one side and the men of violence took over. I do not wish that to happen again. If there is no democracy, my colleagues and I will be pushed to one side, and the men of violence are bound to succeed because we will have been discredited in that place in which we placed our trust—this House.

8.47 pm

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): In following the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), I want to quote Edmund Burke, who said:

"All Government, indeed, every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter."

The House may think that that is a rather surprising quotation but its significance is that it comes from the Ulster Unionist Council's own document "The Way Forward". It has a great deal of truth for the present position.

There is nothing to be feared from the agreement so much as the fear that is engendered by the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues. It is the fear that the unionists are themselves engendering in their Province, towards which we want to look warmly, that is causing the problem.

In substance, the agreement does two things that deeply needed to be done. First, it provides the strongest constitutional guarantee that could be devised for the Province. Secondly, it tackles what everyone recognises as the overwhelming problems in the Province, which is that the issues cross the border; the loyalties of the minorities cross the border, and the terrorists cross the border. I believe that the agreement realistically sets out to tackle those problems.

The constitutional guarantee is to be found first in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 in which this sovereign Parliament enacted that there should be no change in the Union

"without the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland voting in a poll"

as prescribed by the legislation. That guarantee is expressly accepted by the Government of the Republic of Ireland in a legally binding international treaty, which is what this agreement will become when it has been ratified

by the House and agreed as provided in article 13. I understand that the treaty will be registered with the United Nations.

Mr. Budgen *rose*——

Mr. Lyell: Although the agreement will be reviewed in not more than three years, I can see no way in which this Parliament or any Parliament of the United Kingdom together with the Government of the Republic could more firmly entrench the position of the majority in Northern Ireland. Unionist Members should recognise that as a real step.

"The Way Forward" states:

"minority representatives are, in any event, presently not interested in power sharing but solely in the withdrawal of the British guarantee of the constitutional position".

Far from that, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has negotiated an agreement in which that guarantee is expressly reinforced by the Government of the South. "The Way Forward" was published against the background of the All-Ireland Forum which had proposed constitutional changes. I well understand that those changes were deeply worrying to the hon. Members who represented the unionist interest in the North, and they are deeply worrying to me. The forum proposed three possibilities—joint sovereignty of the Province between Britain and the Republic of Ireland, a federation and a unitary state. Far from travelling down that road, this agreement turns its back on it. That route has been repudiated not only by the British Government, as the Prime Minister did immediately after the proposals came forth, but now by the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Cross-border co-operation opens the way for more constructive development in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Lyell: If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I want to come to the cross-border element.

Mr. Budgen: My hon. and learned Friend is leaving the issue. He will not face the constitutional problem.

Mr. Lyell: Very well, I shall be drawn by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. and learned Friend comment on article 1*(c)*? On Friday night, on Channel 4 Mr. FitzGerald said that the nationalists in the Republic attached great importance to that article. I think that Mr. FitzGerald was right. It undoubtedly substantially changes the position in Northern Ireland. It does not merely say that there will be constitutional change only with the consent of a majority. It takes the matter much further and states:

"if in the future a majority of the people of Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland, they"—

the British Government and the Government of the Republic—

"will introduce and support in the respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to that wish."

Mr. Lyell: I thought that my hon. Friend would make a better point.

Mr. Budgen: It was a good point. My hon. and learned Friend should answer it and demolish my point. He should tell me what rubbish it is.

Mr. Lyell: No one knows better than my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) and the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) that the strongest guarantee for all Northern Ireland is the fact that the majority in Northern Ireland will never change their tune.

Mr. Budgen: No.

Mr. Lyell: If my hon. Friend does not realise that, he does not realise anything. He is a lawyer and it comes ill from me to tell him that he has made a legalistic and false point.

I return to the matters of cross-border co-operation. The agreement provides for four things, which are of crucial importance if progress is to be made. The first and the most important, as the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) said, is security. The agreement provides for cross-border co-operation in security, and that means to hound the terrorist. It provides for co-operation in security matters, and that means to catch the terrorist. It provides for co-operation in legal matters, and that means to prosecute the terrorist to conviction. If the agreement does not succeed, our hopes will have been disappointed. In so far as it seeks to make progress in these areas, it deserves, and I am sure that it will have, the support of all Northern Ireland Members. The agreement provides also for co-operation in political matters.

I do not wish to quote extensively from "The Way Forward" but it contains much wisdom. Whether the document goes for legislative devolution—it recognises the difficulties—or for administrative devolution, which it seems to prefer, it recognises that politically a way must be found to involve and to give confidence to the minority in Northern Ireland. I believe that this agreement gives an opportunity to build confidence among the minority.

Finally, I strongly support the comments by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) about article 12. I say this in humility because most hon. Members — I openly include myself — know and understand less than we would wish and have fewer opportunities to become deeply involved in the affairs of the Province than we would wish. I believe that we and representatives of the Parliament of southern Ireland would have greater opportunities to learn and Unionist Members would have greater opportunities to teach us about the problems and difficulties of Northern Ireland if an inter-parliamentary body were set up and encouraged. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to encourage any parliamentary measures that go down that route.

8.58 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I disagree strongly with the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) on this issue. We do not normally see eye to eye on political matters, but I admire his courage in resigning. Ministers do not normally resign these days when they disagree strongly with the Government. I have not noticed any resignation, for instance, by the Secretary of State for Energy. The hon. Member for Eastbourne certainly played honourably.

We should not build up the agreement, thinking that it will bring peace in the immediate future. It would be wrong to be too optimistic. Unfortunately, peace will not come to Northern Ireland for a long time. The danger also is that the Provisional IRA will escalate its violence to

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prove that it remains part of the scene in Northern Ireland. We should therefore be careful about how we approach the agreement. We must watch our words.

The agreement is, I believe, a step in the right direction. It recognises the Irish dimension in the problems and future of Northern Ireland. For too long, Conservative politicians and Governments have argued that Northern Ireland is just the same as the mainland. That is what the unionists have said today. The agreement shows otherwise.

The government of Ireland should be able in the Intergovernmental Conference to reflect the feelings, problems and aspirations of the minority community in the Province. Some say that without the Provisional IRA and other terrorist organisations there would be no such agreement. Perhaps if the power-sharing agreement had been allowed to work and had not been destroyed on the ground by unionists in 1974, there would be no need for the agreement which has been negotiated with the Irish Republic. Far too often the unionists have been their own worst enemies. Controversies and debates in the House relating to Ireland go back to well before the first world war and the bitterness over opposition to home rule plans for Ireland.

We should not overlook unemployment, deprivation, alienation and the general economic circumstances in Northern Ireland. In an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) I argued that some of the electoral support that the Provisional IRA has built up in the last few years is due to the economic circumstances described by my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). Many Government Members know that what I say is true. Such deprivation — massive unemployment and the feeling among many young people, particularly in the Catholic community, that there is no chance of getting work — aids the terrorist cause.

I do not believe that the majority community in Northern Ireland can be bombed or terrorised into a united Ireland. I accept the Labour party's policy, which is clear. It is in favour of a united Ireland in time—but only by consent. Unity can come only from broad consent. That remains the view of the large majority in the Irish Republic. The Irish people know and understand that if a united state is achieved as a result of the bombing and terrorism of the last 15 years, such a state will not be viable. They know that it would be torn apart. They know that people who have been bombed and terrorised into a united Ireland against their will will not give up their old sectarian quarrels. They will not say, "We have lost today and that is it." Such a united Ireland would be totally unstable and a threat to the future of democracy in Ireland as a whole.

I do not therefore believe that a united Ireland is possible in the near future. Surely the lesson of Northern Ireland over the past 60 years is simply that a substantial minority within the Province strongly feel that no consent was given to the partition of Ireland. A great deal of the present difficulty, misery, hardship and suffering is the result of what happened in 1920. A large majority of the Northern Ireland minority community do not support terrorism. They feel, however, that gerrymandering took place when Ireland was divided against the wishes of the people of Ireland as a whole. It would be foolish to repeat history, whereby a substantial minority — mainly the unionists — thought that they had been bombed and terrorised into a united Ireland against their will. There are all kinds of lessons to be learned from what has happened in Northern Ireland during the past 60 years.

As for the expected reaction of the unionists, Unionist politicians believe that they should have a veto on any matter that affects Northern Ireland. That view is completely unacceptable both to the House and to the British people. Right hon. and hon. Members of the Unionist parties have referred to a referendum, but they want a referendum in Northern Ireland where they know that they have an inbuilt majority. They argue, understandably, that this agreement should be tested in Northern Ireland. However, I want to put forward a different point of view. If there is to be a referendum on this agreement, it should be a United Kingdom referendum.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: That is right; and then let the agreement be applied to the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Winnick: If a referendum were to take place on this agreement, the overwhelming majority of the people of this country would be in favour of it, just as there will be an overwhelming majority in favour of it tomorrow night in this House. However, I very much doubt whether the critics of the agreement would like such a referendum.

If Unionist politicians continue to adopt what can only be described as a completely negative attitude, many people will feel increasingly impatient about this country's involvement in Northern Ireland. There will be an understandable feeling that there is no purpose in the considerable expenditure, blood and suffering in being involved in the Province. Most people are willing that this country should continue to be involved in Northern Ireland. They do not want Britain to be seen as giving in to terrorism. That is understandable, but there is a limit to the patience of British people.

Mr. McCusker: I am prepared to accept that there should be a subvention from the rest of the United Kingdom on the basis of equal citizenship and the richer part of the community contributing to the poorer part. If, however, the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that subvention should be based upon charity to those who are no longer citizens of the United Kingdom, I do not want that charity. I speak personally because I have not put this view to my constituents. I would accept the decision of a United Kingdom referendum, but those who voted in that referendum would have to accept its consequences.

Mr. Winnick: Unionist politicians and their supporters will take their own decision. I have put forward a point of view that is, I believe, widely shared by many in this country. A growing number of people do not accept that the purpose of being involved in Northern Ireland is to bolster and maintain the unionist veto or to ensure that everybody should remember who won the battle of the Boyne in 1690. That battle is not of immediate concern to the people on the mainland.

The agreement is a step in the right direction. Unionists must accept that there is no going back to the days of Stormont. It is finished. It will never be resurrected. The sooner that Unionist politicians recognise that they cannot have a permanent veto over constitutional and political progress in Northern Ireland, the better it will be.

Unionist politicians must accept that in Northern Ireland they have to live on an equal basis with the minority community. That is why I believed that it was right, 11 years ago, to bring in the power-sharing Executive and why today I believe that it is right for the Government of the Irish Republic to have some say in the affairs of Northern Ireland. That is why the agreement will be endorsed by a large majority. Unionist politicians must decide whether they want to remain part of the Union on the basis that Parliament remains supreme, or go down a road that will undoubtedly lead to a unilateral declaration of independence.

9.10 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): The watershed of the debate came soon after the impressive speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), whose courage and eloquence we have all admired. It came when the hon. Members for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and for Foyle (Mr. Hume) both addressed the House for 26 minutes and in their separate ways reminded us that everyone who lives in Northern Ireland is a member of a minority. The Catholics are a minority in Northern Ireland itself and the Protestants are a minority in the island of Ireland.

Therefore, both traditions do not feel secure enough to make a gesture of generosity to the other, and there were few gestures of generosity in those speeches. I listened closely to what the hon. Member for Foyle said, as leader of the SDLP. Like the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis), I was not particularly upset when the hon. Member for Foyle did not say that he would join the Northern Ireland Assembly. However, I was upset that there still seemed to be an element of equivocation in the advice that the SDLP will give members of the Catholic community about wholehearted co-operation with the security forces and about encouraging people to join those security forces.

One lesson that I took away after living and working for almost two years in Northern Ireland was that no political or constitutional initiative can ensure that the people of Northern Ireland will live peacefully side by side. However, a foolish initiative can make it more difficult for the communities for Northern Ireland to live peacefully. I fear that this initiative will make it more difficult, although clearly the intention of those who framed it, both in the Civil Service and the Government, was to advance the cause of peace.

Plainly, the agreement would be much strengthened if there were some sign that the majority community in Northern Ireland at least accepted its existence. Some hon. Members will know that, over the years, I have advocated the use of referendums in constitutional matters. I was disappointed to hear my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister say that she did not intend to hold a referendum on the issue but I was not entirely surprised because it is plain that if a referendum were to be held at this moment, it would be soundly defeated in Northern Ireland.

I commend to the Government the example of what happened on the EEC issue. After we had been in the EEC for some time, when fears about the Community had largely dissipated, a referendum was held and was won by those who advocated staying in the EEC. I urge the Government to consider holding a referendum in three years' time, when in any event this agreement will have to be looked at again, when tempers have had time to cool down, because if the agreement works as well as its advocates say, at that time the majority community in Northern Ireland will be beginning to come around to it. If the Government were now to say, "No referendum at this moment, but we will test the temperature in three years' time," I believe that there would be a greater chance of success.

In her statement last Monday the Prime Minister referred no fewer than 12 times to the fact that the status of Northern Ireland will remain unchanged so long as that is the wish of the majority of its people. That phrase has often been used in today's debate, and at present there can be absolutely no doubt that the majority of the people in Northern Ireland wish to continue as members of the United Kingdom. That fact has been acknowledged by the Government in Dublin. However, given that at present this is wholly uncontroversial, it would be wise to say what we mean by "the wish of the majority of its people".

Plainly, on a matter as important as changing nationality and doing away with the border, a low majority on a low poll will not be enough. When we discussed devolution for Scotland and Wales this House made it plain that it would require a substantial majority on a substantial turnout. Therefore, when it comes to a change of status for Northern Ireland we should make it absolutely plain now—and get the agreement of the Government in Dublin—that this cannot happen until an actual majority of those on the electoral role vote positively in favour of a change. Only then would one begin the long process of deciding the financial arrangements and the preparation of a Bill which a year or two later should again be put to the people of Northern Ireland with the requirement that an absolute majority of those on the electoral role should vote in favour. That is looking a long time ahead. Despite the Anglo-Irish agreement, I fear that trouble will continue, and that the House will have to debate the serious security position in Northern Ireland for many years to come.

9.19 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): It is about a year since I had the privilege of speaking in a debate on Northern Ireland from this Dispatch Box, and I am particularly pleased to do so again in a debate on Northern Ireland that will last for two days. We should have undertaken such debates more often, because this is one of the most serious matters that affect the British people and the people of Ireland. Indeed, it might have been an advantage if the debate could have been seen on television, as many people would have learned a great deal from it.

The Labour party accepts the agreement as a small but significant step in the right direction. It is a small step because it does not change the status of Northern Ireland, and may change only the climate of the relationship between Britain and Ireland. That is particularly important, but it does not change Northern Ireland's status in the longer term, as some unionists have feared, and some people, including me, would have wished.

There are three significant areas in the agreement. First, it is significant that the British Government, for the second time in recent years, have ruled out one of the three options on the future of Northern Ireland—the integration of Northern Ireland into the United Kingdom. The unionists are most upset because they recognise that.

Secondly, the agreement is significant because it recognises that the problem cannot be resolved only within

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Northern Ireland, nor merely in Ireland, but by Britain and Ireland together. It is and always has been a British-Irish problem, and it needs to be addressed at that level.

Thirdly, the agreement is significant because it recognises for the second time in recent years—the first time was at Sunningdale—that Northern Ireland is not a normal part of the United Kingdom. There is nothing surprising about that, because few hon. Members on either the Conservative or Labour Benches have ever treated it as such.

One may argue that Scotland, Wales and England are all treated differently, but for many years Northern Ireland has been treated much more differently. During the debate one of my hon. Friends tried to point out that during the second world war there was no conscription in Northern Ireland, and that the Irish people served in the British forces. On previous occasions I have pointed out that none of the British political parties organises in Northern Ireland. There are many fundamental differences between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

The problem in Northern Ireland is that the two communities have only negative power; and they do not have the power to progress as we think they should have done. It is almost two years since I had the privilege of going to the Forum in Dublin — like my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), I, too, commend the Irish political parties for that initiative—and saying that an initiative by Britain and Ireland was needed because without it the leadership could not be available within Northern Ireland.

The British have claimed to be the referee for too long when, however well intentioned we may have been, we have been part of the problem. We must recognise that if we are to be honest with ourselves, and with the people of Northern Ireland and southern Ireland.

What do the British people want? Sadly, the Prime Minister has still not addressed that question. The significance of that is that almost everyone in the House, the Unionists excluded perhaps, is a conditional unionist. They are not conditional unionists when it comes to England, Scotland or Wales, but they are conditional unionists when it comes to Northern Ireland, for the reasons that I have already addressed. The unionists in Northern Ireland understand us, as conditional unionists, to be saying that they are only slightly a part of the United Kingdom.

It is precisely because there has been no effective leadership from Britain and Ireland that the negative power within the Northern Ireland communities has led not just to a splitting between the two communities but a splintering of the society. Four major political parties operate in Northern Ireland and many times more small ones. It is not just the political parties that have splintered; it is the communities. It can be taken even further because the paramilitary groups have also splintered. We sometimes address the House as though the paramilitary groups are some well organised, super-co-ordinated groups which do not disintegrate within themselves.

Again, it is worth looking at some of the underlying facts because they say a lot about the overall political climate. Between 1969 and 1985, 119 nationalist paramilitaries were killed by other nationalist paramilitaries. In other words, more members of the paramilitaries on the republican side have been killed by their own people than have been killed by the security forces. Precisely the same applies to the loyalist paramilitary groups. More of them have been killed by their own side than have been killed by the security forces. That is what I mean when I say that the society is splintering.

A breakdown of the citizens killed in Northern Ireland shows that 1,100 Roman Catholics and 931 Protestants have been killed in the same period. Of those, it is worth remembering—unfortunately, we do not always say it outside as loudly as we should — that 570 of those civilians were killed by unionist paramilitary groups. At the end of the day I do not draw a distinction in Northern Ireland between a person who wears a uniform and a person who does not. The killing of any one of those diminishes all of us, and we need to say that loud and clear. But we have to recognise, as I have said many times before, that the paramilitary problem is on both sides of the community, not just on one. We cannot drum that message in heavily enough, not just in order to get balance in the debate, but, more importantly, to help us in the House and Britain to understand the problem in a way that perhaps we have not done to the degree that I would like.

The agony of the unionists—it is an agony—is that they recognise more than most Conservative Members, and, indeed, many of my hon. Friends in the Labour party, that the British people do not really recognise them as British. The British see them as Irish. They may call them Northern Irish or a range of other things, such as Ulstermen, but ultimately the British people see them as Irish.

After the Prime Minister made her statement to the House on 18 November, the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) rose to speak, and his words ring in my ears now. He described his feeling of utter desolation. That says more than anything else. The utter desolation that the hon. Gentleman was expressing was the feeling of the unionist community that they were being pushed out.

In his speech today the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) reiterated that even more powerfully. He talked about the battle of the Somme, the Union Jack, his loyalty to the Queen and the flag and everything else. The battle of the Somme is talked about in Northern Ireland in a way that is not understood here. The battle of the Somme with its acts of incredible heroism, even blind heroism, and the enormous slaughter of the occasion, has some special meaning to all of us. But for Northern Ireland unionists it meant that they were cementing their place in the Union and tying the knot to Britain, to their mistress. Sadly, they saw it that way, but we did not. We wonder why they feel bitter and why they cry betrayal and treason. That is why and that is what we need to understand.

Although it is written down that Northern Ireland will remain a part of the United Kingdom unless it wishes to do otherwise, I have never ceased to wonder why any unionist wants it to be so. It is not there for England, Scotland or Wales. Unionists want it there for one fundamental reason — they feel insecure about their position.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East talked about three houses. Presumably, one was Northern Irish, one British and one Irish. If I walked into a family home and found a notice on a bedroom door saying, "I will not be forced out of this house unless I agree to go," I would ask why that person felt so insecure. The reason, as I have said on many occasions, is that he knows that Northern Ireland is

not a normal part of the United Kingdom. People know that not just because of the agreement but because British Governments, past and present, have reiterated that. Therefore, Britain, and particularly the Conservative party, has a duty to say what it believes. The Labour party has made it clear that it wants a united Ireland. We have spelt out on several occasions how we think we should move towards that and we have talked of consent. The Conservative party has not said what it wants. The unionists know what they want, and again that is the reason why they express fears of betrayal and treason. That is the problem.

The right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), for whom I have great respect, tackled a difficult problem extremely well. I do not know whether that praise helps him any more than his praise helped the Prime Minister. He knows, and I think still does, that agreements of this nature say to the Northern Irish people, "You will not be a normal part of the United Kingdom." There is only one end to that road. He knows that better than most. Somebody in the Conservative party must start to say that and recognise it.

If we do not address ourselves to that problem, the danger is that we shall drift into crisis management. That touches on all the points that my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn mentioned in his opening speech when he talked about the erosion of democracy. It ends with the super-grass trials, the juryless trials and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. I hear some people naively talking about trying to ban the Provisional Sinn Fein. One can almost hear the arguments. They assume that if one tries to smother the symptoms, the problem will go away, but I am afraid that the problem will stay.

Mr. McCusker: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's remarkable speech. Will he bear one thing in mind? The inevitable conclusion of the Conservative Government, or any other Government, telling us where we stand in relation to the rest of the United Kingdom is not a united Ireland.

Mr. Soley: I do not accept that. I understand what the hon. Gentleman has been moving towards during the past few days since his comments about desolation — an independent Northern Ireland. I have looked at that possibility on several occasions, and I do not think that it is a viable solution.

Many people in Northern Ireland are prepared to fight and die for an independent Northern Ireland. That is the danger. We must address ourselves to that when we talk about the way in which we achieve our aims.

The unionists are not stupid or blind to what is happening. They feel betrayed because they recognise that conditional unionism—not outright unionism—the sort of unionism to which the Prime Minister said that she was attaching herself, is not a permanent solution for Northern Ireland. It cannot possibiy be. No one is selling the agreement as a permanent solution. Everybody recognises that it is a small step. I describe it as a small but significant step in the right direction. Other people, on both sides of the water and in both the Republic and the North, see it as one useful thing to do to deal with the present problem. Not everybody sees it in the same way as I do.

This is the crucial point where I commend the agreement. It recognises the way in which we need to protect the unionist culture, the religion of Protestantism and unionist civil rights. Those are the things that have to be protected. They represent an enormously strong tradition. If I had a message to give to the unionist people, it would be that such a tradition cannot survive if it lives only on the past and in a siege mentality. It needs to be part of a wider community. The tragedy of Northern Ireland is that it has become so isolated.

I have said that we believe in a united Ireland. We think that we can move towards it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said so eloquently, and as many others have said, it is no part of the Labour party's philosophy that the people of Northern Ireland should be driven into a united Ireland. People in Ireland who take the matter seriously would not want to do that either. No Irish political party believes that an all-Ireland political settlement could work unless a significant number of people of the North were willing to work that settlement, and that means a majority in one form or another. That is what we mean when we talk about a united Ireland by consent. It must be a solution that works for people.

It is important to recognise that one of the most positive things about the agreement, which applies whether one believes in a united Ireland, as I and my party do, or takes the Conservative party's view, which applies equally as much, is the harmonisation of the social and economic systems, which offers enormous potential to the people of Ireland as a whole. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn said, it is nonsense that, for the purpose of EEC common agricultural policy grants, we treat the two parts of Ireland differently because of the different national policies. That is ridiculous. It does the unionists and the nationalists no good. Agriculture is an important basic industry for both the North and the South. There is great potential in food production, packaging and processing, and joint operations. However, we underplay those things at the moment. If the agreement did no more than realise that potential, I would give it a big welcome.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Is the hon. Gentleman speaking for himself or his party?

Mr. Soley: I was asked to speak for my party tonight, and that is precisely what I am doing. We are staying on the same lines. The hon. Gentleman might not understand it. I am willing to give him extra time afterwards if he wants to do his homework. Our policy is on exactly the same line and it does not change.

The agreement is a step in the right direction, whether one believes in a united Ireland or, as the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) put it so well, whether one maximises the agreement in order to minimise the violence. I thought that that was very good stuff. However, at the end of the day, the House has to remember that Parliament is sovereign. It decides what happens in the United Kingdom. As long as Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, we shall make the decisions on Northern Ireland. That is why there cannot be a veto on political proposals or developments that are designed to win consent or, as some Conservative Members recognise, to improve an intolerable situation.

We are not saying to the House that the agreement will bring forth miracles. It will not. Sadly, it will not stop the killings. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North rightly said, there is even a danger of further

[Mr. Soley]

killings, not just by one side. That is one of the constant problems that we have to live with when we deal with Northern Ireland.

However, the agreement is an important step forward and the House should support it. Neither I nor any of my right hon. and hon. Friends are prepared to support an attempt to make the present situation just work for ever. It is eroding our democracy and that of southern Ireland. It is playing havoc with the lives of people in Northern Ireland, republican and unionist, Catholic and Protestant. Sooner or later we shall have to deal with that in the way in which we have begun to do today.

9.39 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office Dr. Rhodes Boyson: I thank the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) for his support, although I do not agree with his diagnosis. There are alternatives, such as direct rule, but there is no single road.

We have had a wide-ranging debate involving hon. Members of all parties. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who has always been a man of honour and dignity. We entered the House together and we have often dined together. I regret, as many hon. Members do, his resignation, but respect his reasons for it. His integrity raises the standing of the House.

I enjoyed the speeches of the three "Bs." The constituencies of several hon. Members sent to Northern Ireland begin with the letter B—those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler), my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) and the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), of course, Brent, North is another.

I cannot refer to every point that has been made today. There have been many points and about 20 hon. Members have spoken. We have reduced the winding-up time to allow as many people as possible to contribute.

The most important reason for obtaining stability in Northern Ireland is to put an end to the killings. We all agree on that. We also want people to be able to walk the streets in safety. Another matter linked to unemployment and the economy of the Province is that until there is political stability, we shall not get investment from abroad to get the Province moving, a better standard of living and less unemployment, which is often a source of recruitment for the paramilitaries.

The Leader of the Opposition is not present, but I often faced him across the Dispatch Box when we were involved in education matters. We have moved on since then, although he has moved much faster than I have —[*Interruption.*] That was the understatement of the year. I am moving along gently.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne said that Ministers come and go. I come and go, but the Leader of the Opposition has gone. He has not returned to the debate tonight. The right hon. Gentleman said that unemployment had created the troubles, but it has not. We must get that right. Northern Ireland suffers from one tenth of the violence of 10 or 12 years ago, but three times the unemployment. That does not mean that we do not wish to get rid of unemployment. However, the violence comes from the tension between the two communities.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Rubbish.

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman may be an expert on rubbish, but the facts are there. At present, we have one tenth of the killings of 10 years ago, with three times the unemployment. That does not mean that if unemployment increased there would be no killings, but it cannot be said that unemployment is the only cause of the killings.

We want more employment in Northern Ireland. The Government are creating more small and medium firms per head of the population in Northern Ireland than in any other region in the United Kingdom. Shipbuilding, small agriculture and textiles have run down more quickly in western Europe and in Great Britain than in Northern Ireland. However, more high technology investment is needed from large combines abroad.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned unemployment generally, but the worst aspect in Northern Ireland is male unemployment, which destabilises the family more than anything else and can help the paramilitaries. If a man has no integrity with his family because he has no wage to take home on a Friday, he will try to create it in another way. The Province has 21·6 per cent. male unemployment, compared with 15·9 per cent. in the United Kingdom as a whole. Overall, the Province has 20·9 per cent. unemployment and the United Kingdom 13·4 per cent. In Strabane, there is almost 50 per cent. male unemployment.

The Leader of the Opposition said that Northern Ireland needs more money. Since I have been a Northern Ireland Minister, many of my friends have accused me of becoming a neo-Keynesian, despite that fact that I adhere to my monetarist views. Whatever is wrong with Northern Ireland, it is not a shortage of money. As the right hon. Gentleman said, £1.5 billion, or £1,000 for every man, woman and child, is transferred from the Treasury to keep Northern Ireland afloat. By saying that, I do not intend to insult the people of Northern Ireland. The Exchequer transfers money similarly to other under-developed areas in Britain. However, we must face the fact that, unless we can regenerate the economy, that transfer of money must continue, and a once-proud province, which was one of the industrial wonders of the world, will never get off the ground again.

Northern Ireland needs more investment from Great Britain, America, Germany, Hong Kong and Japan. What stops us obtaining that investment is political instability. However, foreign companies already in Northern Ireland are expanding, and yesterday we heard the great news that Du Pont will build its most modern Kevlar plant outside America in Northern Ireland. It is one of the largest investment in the United Kingdom this year. But Du Pont has been in Northern Ireland for more than 25 years. It knows how good is the work force, in Maydown, but the problem is obtaining investment from firms that have never been in Northern Ireland. At present, 11,000 workers are employed by 27 American firms. That represents one in eight workers in the Province; one in three is employed by firms based in Great Britain or other

Some hon. Members asked why my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State flew to America after the agreement was signed. Had America forced us into the agreement, as some people believe, all that he would have needed to do would have been to pick up the telephone and say, "We have done it." He had to go to America to inform Americans of what was happening, because they were intensely interested. Never forget that 40 million Americans believe that their origins lie in Northern Ireland

or southern Ireland. My hon. Friend had to tell them what the agreement was about. It seems to me perfectly sensible. I have great faith in my hon. Friend. Sometimes we disagree economically and politically, but we stand shoulder to shoulder on this matter. If this was simply an American plot, he would not have needed to go there. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown) appears to be asleep and not listening to my speech——

Mr. Hugh Brown: It is unfair of the Minister to put that on the record when the truth is that I am listening to his speech with great interest.

Dr. Boyson: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I meant it in a cheerful way. I must stop being cheerful, because it is dangerous and from time to time one can be misunderstood. I am delighted to put on the record the fact that the hon. Gentleman made an extremely fair and caring speech, which was listened to with great interest. He asked about American investment almost as though American investment was wrong. The mass of the people of Northern Ireland, whatever their politics, would want 10 more American firms in Northern Ireland tomorrow, absorbing 10,000 to 20,000 of the unemployed. That would transform the Province's image.

Mr. McCusker: Would the Minister mind me bringing him back to the Anglo-Irish agreement? Is he saying that, in exchange for giving the Irish Republic—let me put it in media terms—a say in the government of Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic will forgo its investment opportunities? After all, Northern Ireland competes with the Republic for investment. Would that be realistic, bearing in mind the fact that, even taking account of the statistics on impoverishment in Northern Ireland, by any standards the Province is better off than the Irish Republic?

Dr. Boyson: The hon. Gentleman has an extremely narrow view if he believes that the only alternative to investment in Northern Ireland is investment in the Republic. There are 137 other countries in the world. I should be delighted if we could co-operate with the Republic in attracting more investment and tourism to the entire island. If one reads the survey which we conducted three years ago among decision makers in Britain, the United States and Germany, one discovers that their biggest anxiety about investing in Northern Ireland is its political instability.

When asked, 88 per cent. of the decision-makers in Britain, 86 per cent. in the United States and 63 per cent. in Germany said that the greatest disincentive to investment in Northern Ireland was political instability. There must be political stability if the Province is ever to be revitalised economically and in many other ways.

There has been much discussion in the House today about what the agreement means. Opposition Members have stated their views and tried to explain the Government's view, but I shall now give the Government's view in a straightforward way. This agreement represents the first occasion when in a binding international agreement the Republic of Ireland has affirmed that there will be no change in the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of the majority and that the present wish of the majority is for no change.

The Sunningdale agreement did not become a binding international agreement, nor did it contain any recognition by the Republic of Ireland Government that the present wish of the majority was for no change. The present agreement is different and that is stated for the record. The British Government have no desire to push Northern Ireland away. The speech of the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) interpreted the Government's action and, although it was not a mischievous speech, he could have misled individuals into believing that the British Government were intentionally distancing themselves from Northern Ireland and saying, "Go your own way." The agreement does not say that. As my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland have said, that protection is written into the beginning of the agreement and so protects the unionist community.

The agreement will lead to improved security co-operation on both sides of the border and it registers the intention of the Government of the Republic of Ireland to accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. Right hon. and hon. Members have said that the Republic said that it was co-operating before, and I have no doubt that it was, but creating a structure in the Intergovernmental Conference where talks can take place and ideas can be exchanged will obviously lead to improvements in security. Such structured meetings should lead to the formation of relationships and should allow the RUC and the Garda to work closely together, which should help security in Northern Ireland for the benefit of all. Some hon. Members may laugh at that and think that I am being naive, but I believe that 99 per cent. of the people in this country would be similarly naive and believe what I am saying.

Mr. Michael Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Boyson: I shall not give way. I have already given way and I must get through my speech.

I hope that, with the encouragement of the Government of the Republic of Ireland, there will be more recruitment of members of the minority community into the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment. In many United States cities and elsewhere Catholic emigrés from the island of Ireland have become the backbone of the police and influential in the army. The Government would welcome their help in increasing numbers in Northern Ireland in the defeat of the paramilitaries.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Boyson: I shall not give way. The hon. Member has already had his share and spoke for half an hour.

I can tell the nationalist minority, like the majority, what their responsibilities are and how they are covered by the agreement. The nationalist minority are not simply observers of the agreement. I am sure that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) will agree with me. They are participants to help settle the fears of the unionist community by their increased help in security matters.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery) mentioned devolution. He is not with us because he is elsewhere at the moment. *[Interruption.]* At last I have the unanimous approval of the House. I must work on that achievement. I know where my right hon. Friend is. I am sure he is dining well and discussing very important political matters.

The agreement does not mark the end of consultations for the unionist community. The unionist community has

[Dr. Boyson]

a voice in the House. If they disappear for two months, there will be no consultation with them in their absence. It would be difficult to discuss matters with them while they are fighting elections elsewhere. The unionists have representation in the House and in their own Assembly. They have the Assembly and the district councils. Those are all places for consultation if people would use them instead of shutting them down. Only yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister devoted a considerable amount of time to a delegation of unionists who came over to see her.

Those four points are firmly delivered for the unionist community. For the nationalist community, there is full recognition of their identity in Northern Ireland. The agreement recognises that both communities are legitimately there and have a legitimate identity. As one Member after another has said today, we can set up structures to help—we believe that this one will help—but in the last resort success must rest on the co-operation of both communities and their wish to work together to make Northern Ireland a more peaceful place than it has been in the past.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Boyson: No. I am watching the time and I did not give way to others who wished to intervene.

Similarly, for the nationalist community, at the Intergovernmental Conference British Ministers and Ministers from the Republic will meet to discuss matters of mutual concern. In the long run, that should also be of advantage to the unionist community because the traffic will be two way. We shall not simply be replying to what Ministers from the Republic say. *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but I cannot imagine my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or any Northern Ireland Minister in any British Government going along to listen to a list off things that the Republic says that we should do without taking a list of our own. It will be a two-way traffic. *[Interruption.]* I have more faith in our parliamentarians than some Ulster unionists now in the House.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Boyson: No, I shall not give way. I have only four minutes left.

Mention has been made of a referendum. Referendums were held in Wales and in Scotland because they concerned internal matters related to the way in which those regions should be governed. This is an agreement between two sovereign Governments as to how they should work together for the benefit of Northern Ireland as well as the Republic, which obviously also means for the benefit of the United Kingdom. Two sovereign Governments have made an agreement. That is why we are debating it and I hope that the House will pass it tomorrow as the Irish Parliament passed it last week.

On investment, there was no bribe in the shape of money from America. There is still no specification of money actually coming. Obviously, however, especially on the industrial front where investment and jobs are needed, if America wishes to help in the creation of jobs in Northern Ireland and in the Republic it would be foolish and miserable to refuse that help. If 'Tip' O'Neill and President Reagan are delighted by that—*[Interruption.]* I am surprised at the insularity of Unionist Members sometimes. Most of us would take new jobs in our constituencies if they came from Timbuktu. For the past 14 months, I have worked to bring jobs to the Province and other Ministers have done the same. I regard that as vital in every way.

Mr. Nellist: Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Boyson: No, I am not giving way.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery), with whom I used to argue reguarly about education — he has become somewhat hairier than in those days of yore—asked about the size of the Regular Army in Northern Ireland. It is now down almost to garrison strength — 9,000 regulars with 6,500 in the UDR. I know that the hon. Gentleman would have worried if I had not given those figures.

Finally, it is vital that we take a detached but totally concerned view of the Northern Ireland situation and that we are not trapped in history, important though history is. The sense of the agreement is an attempt to distance ourselves from a past in Northern Ireland which has recently had severe difficulties both politically and economically. On one side it gives a firm commitment from the British Government and from the Government of the Republic of Ireland that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom as long as the majority so wishes. On the other side, it accepts the legitimate identity of the nationalist community and recognises that the two parts of the island of Ireland have interests in common.

The agreement thus gives to the people of Northern Ireland a promise of a more settled, confident, co-operative and more prosperous future. Such a future is possible if both communities in Northern Ireland are prepared to work for it, and I commend the agreement to the House.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed Tomorrow.

Parental and Family Leave

10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 11118/83 and 10681/84, draft Directive and amended draft Directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons; endorses the Government's view that these matters are best pursued by voluntary negotiations between employers and employees; and welcomes the United Kingdom's endeavours to encourage instead Community initiatives which enhance job prospects for men and women.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Bottomley. The Department's explanatory memoranda which are before the House set out the background to this evening's debate. The draft directive seeks to create an entitlement for parental leave, and leave for family reasons, which would be harmonised throughout the Community. Both forms of leave will be an individual entitlement for both men and women. The proposal would give all employees an individual right to a minimum of three months' parental leave to be taken during the first two years of a child's life and a minimum number of days' leave per year for pressing family reasons. The proposal is intended to enable a working parent to stay at home to look after a child. It would require that any allowance paid during parental leave should be met from public funds and no level of allowance is specified.

The Commission's main aim in bringing this proposal forward is to promote equal opportunities by making it easier for women to combine work and childcare and to encourage men to play a greater role in looking after children. The Commission also believes that it will assist the development of its family policy, one aspect of which is to improve facilities for care of children of working parents. Finally, it believes that by reorganising working time it will contribute to a reduction in unemployment.

It is our view that Community legislation to impose parental leave is not necessary for the promotion of equal opportunities, for two reasons. First, reconciling child care with employment is not a problem to which there is a single solution suitable to be imposed by legislation. Indeed, there are a number of possible solutions, and parental leave itself is only a temporary and partial one. Other solutions include day nurseries—whether public, private, or provided by the employer—childminders, child minding by relatives, part-time work, and shared childminding among friends and neighbours. For the same reasons universally imposed parental leave arrangements are not essential to promote family life.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Before my hon. Friend goes on to the merits or lack of merits of the proposal it seems that he is talking about Community family policy. Did we join a European family and has it got any legal status in this issue? There is some dispute about this. The European Legislation Select Committee asked whether the Community had any legal competence to have a policy in this area. What is the Government's view? Is the Community legally competent to proceed with policies in this area? If the Government are not convinced of the Community's legal competence, what will the Government do about this?

Mr. Bottomley: The simple answer to my hon. Friend is that there are differing views on the Community's competence. It will fall within the first part of article 100, as my hon. Friend will know. The Government propose to take part in this debate and to listen to the views expressed in the House and then I shall reply to the debate if I catch Mr. Deputy Speaker's eye. Parental leave is fundamentally different to maternity leave, where the physiological fact of childbirth creates a specific need for withdrawal from work. Like the other arrangements I have mentioned, parental leave can have a role to play, but the benefit which it brings is confined to the relatively short period of the leave itself. When parental leave is over, the needs of the child and the requirements of the job remain.

The second reason why we do not believe that the proposal promotes equal opportunity is that, to ensure that the arrangements are not discriminatory, it is not necessary to establish at Community level specific leave entitlements that must apply in all undertakings regardless of circumstances. In that respect, it is no different from many other important aspects of employment such as recruitment, and promotion procedures. There does not have to be a rigid formula for each of them at Community level to prevent discrimination. All that is necessary is that general anti-discrimination measures should apply.

It is widely recognised in Europe that the United Kingdom has a good record on equal opportunities. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 is now supplemented by the Equal Opportunities Commission's excellent code of practice of 1985, which has the full backing of the Government, employers and trade unions. It ensures that personal leave arrangements and child care are addressed adequately by the United Kingdom's equal opportunities measures.

It is also argued—no doubt it will be by supporters of the amendment—that the draft directive offers new opportunities for work sharing as a solution to changing domestic circumstances. It is counter-productive to try to fight unemployment by imposing working arrangements on employers and employees that might not suit them and which they might not be able to afford. Many women who return to work after maternity absence are already able to go part-time so as to spend longer at home. Our job splitting scheme encourages that. It applies equally to a father or anyone else who decides to spend more time at home for whatever reason. Employers are increasingly recognising the benefit of job splitting, not least because of the grant of £840 available for taking on an unemployed person for the other half of a job.

Such voluntary arrangements would lose their attraction and flexibility if they were imposed without due regard to the costs and the longer-term viability of the parents' job. The proposal is unnecessary and would be damaging for four principal reasons. First, these matters are best dealt with between employers and employees according to their priorities, needs and circumstances and what they can afford. Secondly, the draft directive would impose minimum, but not harmonised, conditions of employment more favourable than currently exist in any member state. It is a piece of social engineering rather than a genuine proposal for harmonisation. Thirdly, implementation of the directive would give a wrong signal to the labour market, as it would add to employers' costs and increase the administrative burden on them, thereby damaging competitiveness and hindering the key task of reducing unemployment. Fourthly, in so far as the draft directive

[Mr. Bottomley]

would create costs that would fall on public funds, the Government do not consider that such expenditure is, or is likely to become, a priority over other more pressing demands on such funds. This is not the right time to give extra rights to people in jobs at the expense of the unemployed.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, irrespective of egality, article 100 and harmonisation, unless there is a fixed statutory limit which provides rights that may be taken up, the power of employers will be too great? Irrespective of the source of the legislation, will the hon. Gentleman agree the value of that principle?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman tempts me into broader considerations, some practical others philosophical. I prefer to wait until the end of the debate to see whether the matter comes up more generally or more specifically.

The Social Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg in June referred the draft directive back to its working group for further consideration. There have been regular discussions and negotiations about the text of the proposal in Brussels during the past few months. When the Department announced its consultation exercise earlier this year, it referred to several areas of the basic proposal that had been suggested in the Council machinery — member states might restrict parental leave to the period immediately following maternity leave, parental leave might take the form of an entitlement which parents could allocate between themselves as they wished, there might be a safeguard to enable employers to refuse or to defer leave in cases of serious difficulty with the undertaking, there might be a threshold excluding small and medium-sized firms from the proposal.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way again and apologise for coming back to him. Perhaps he will clarify a point. There are people on hourly pay and people on salaries. Will the Government come forward with an allowance for those on hourly pay? After all, the firm does not have to pay them. Will those on salaries lose that part of their salaries while they are taking parental leave? Will it be one rule for those on salaries and another for those on hourly pay?

Mr. Bottomley: I think that the Government's intention is that there should not be a rule for anybody.

The variants that I have been discussing have since figured prominently in negotiations, but no clear resolution concerning them has emerged. We are unsure of the precise proposition that the Luxembourg Presidency will put on the table at the Social Affairs Council on 5 December.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Minister need not take too much trouble to persuade Conservative Members that the directive is a load of rubbish that should be thrown out. We accept that. But the Minister is moving a motion which says that, instead of all this rubbish, the Government want to encourage Community initiatives to "enhance job prospects". Before he sits down will he tell us exactly what the Government have in mind? Do they have in mind a lot of public expenditure within the Community in order to create jobs, because that is quite contrary to what the Government have sought to do at home?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has tempted me to pre-empt what I was going to say at the end of the debate. Perhaps I should list the aims. The first is to try to encourage deregulation in the EC's activities so that we can remove barriers to employment. The second is to try to ensure that every proposed directive has an employment impact statement tied to the proposal. Most of the things on the agenda during the last few years have been either neutral or harmful to employment. The third aim is to ensure that when Social Affairs and Employments Ministers come together in Brussels, they discuss the sort of things discussed in their national capitals, such as how to enable the spirit of enterprise and greater employment to overtake the increase in unemployment that has taken place in Europe during the past 12 years. *[Interruption.]* I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) will listen to my words. He should be cheering them to the echo, but he does not seem to be convinced, or to be nodding his head in approval.

The draft directive has already been extensively discussed in the United Kingdom. The proposal has been debated and reported upon in the other place and, of course, the Department of Employment announced a consultation exercise to which the majority of interested parties responded. Many arguments both for and against the proposal were put forward and I may return to them at the end of the debate. I should record that the various proposals provoked little interest and still less support.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I am most anxious to help my hon. Friend, as I think that he is reading this nonsense terribly well. It is a great credit to any Minister to read rubbish well, and my hon. Friend is reading it very well. But apart from reading such Common Market rubbish well——

Mr. Teddy Taylor: Pure nonsense.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I object to the word "pure". But does my hon. Friend the Minister think that the directives will promote equal opportunities? Does he really believe, as the Opposition seem to do, that they will

"improve the quality of family life"

and that they will make a useful contribution towards reducing unemployment? As an employer, I know that nothing will increase unemployment more than this rubbish that we have to discuss tonight for one and a half hours, so I invite my hon. Friend the Minister to read it quickly and to get the debate over with so that we can vote against it.

Mr. Bottomley: I am not sure whether some of my words have been misinterpreted as meaning support for the draft directives. I should make it clear that the Government are not asking the House to approve the directives. The Government do no intend to approve them in Brussels.

The Government have not disputed that leave and career break arrangements, and opportunities for part-time work can play an important part in promoting equal opportunities and improving family welfare. However, we have noted the sharp divisions that exist both at home and abroad over the relative merits of this proposal. It is our considered view that the proposal is unnecessary. Its objectives can be, and are being, attained in the United

Kingdom through voluntary agreements between employers and their work forces where the demand for them exists. To burden employers further especially in small firms, in the way that the directive proposes would in all probability damage rather than improve the employment prospects of those whom it seeks to assist. This draft directive will be bad for jobs and for that reason, if no other, this Government oppose it.

10.15 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"welcomes European Community Documents Nos. 11118/83 and 10681/84, draft Directive and amended draft Directive which recommend a Community minimum statutory provision for parental leave and leave for family reasons, which would promote equal opportunity, improve the quality of family life and encourage greater flexibility of working time and shorter working hours as a useful contribution to the reduction of unemployment; and deplores the fact that the United Kingdom is now the only member state in direct opposition to these proposals."

Like other hon. Members, I am not riveted by the Common Market. However, as the Government lack any genuine policies to move towards equality for women, I am willing to grasp at any straws from Europe that might persuade the Government to fall into line with what other European countries are doing——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Ms. Richardson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman if he will wait for a few moments. I know that he will not let me proceed with my speech without attempting to interrupt me.

Any hon. Member not interested in the debate, who might wander into it having collected his documents from the Vote Office, might be forgiven for questioning the paucity of the documents, yet that is often the case with debates on EEC directives. Documents relating to this debate are dated no later than January 1984, and some are dated a year previous to that.

One of my complaints is that when the negotiations on EEC directives take place in Europe, at whatever level, this House is not taken into account, nor given any account of amendments tabled. Therefore, we are often faced with watered down directives, and the directives before us may be the result of what has happened during the past few months. I hope that, as a result of this debate, the Government will attend the meeting on 5 December and support the directives as a means of achieving more equality in this country. The content of the directives is of great importance to women in Britain.

However, throughout their period of office, the Government have shown many examples of their hypocritical attitude towards equality for women—and that goes for Conservative Members in the Chamber tonight. For example, the Government opposed the Bill on sexual equality that I introduced in 1983, they obstructed the proposal for equal pay for work of equal value, they gave a contemptuous response to the sex discrimination ruling against Britain's immigration rules and they meanmindedly refused to extend the invalid care allowance to married and cohabiting women.

Mr. Marlow: I understand what the hon. Lady is saying, and I sympathise with her desire for this legislation. The hon. Lady, like many hon. Members, has said that she is against any increase in European competence in areas in which it should not put forward policies. Indeed, there is some legal doubt whether the EEC has the authority to put forward such policies. Does the hon. Lady want the matter to be challenged legally in the proper manner before it is brought before the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I remind hon. Members that they must speak to the terms of the directives. If the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) follows the line suggested by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), that will be out of order.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not know whether you have yet had the opportunity to read the documents, especially the report from the Select Committee. In its report, the Select Committee specifically said that there was some legal doubt about whether the EEC had any competence to pursue this issue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The debate must concern itself with the terms of the directives.

Ms. Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was proposing to do that.

With the Government's response to the European Commission's proposals for parental and family leave, we have a clear statement of the Government's attitude to men——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Oh!

Ms. Richardson: ——who wish to take a real and equal share in the care of their families. That surprised the hon. Gentleman, did it not?

The Government's curt motion to "note" the commission's proposals demonstrates yet again just how out of touch they are with day-to-day reality and the priorities of people's lives. It is a further example, despite all the Conservative party's claims to be the party of the family, of the Government's failure to support measures designed to help families.

As the Equal Opportunities Commission has said in its submission to the Department of Employment and the House of Lords, parental and family leave are two forms of leave provision which greatly assist workers with family responsibilities. The commission has given its full support to parental leave—which should not be confused with paternity leave—to give rights to fathers as well as to mothers to time off, following the end of maternity leave, to care for a young child under two. I can see nothing wrong with that. The EOC has fully endorsed family leave, which would enable employees to take time off for pressing and important family reasons, including the illness of a child or the person caring for it.

The TUC has expressed its support for such provision, together with many organisations concerned with the welfare of children, such as the Maternity Alliance and the National Council for One Parent Families, which have welcomed the proposals as

"providing a framework within which child care could be accepted as a manageable part of the working parent's life, rather than a source of crisis."

In Britain, almost half of all single parents—mostly women—are in paid employment; half of all women with dependent children are in paid employment; and about 88 per cent. of employed men have dependent children. Yet Britain's record on rights for working parents is, contrary to what the Under-Secretary of State

[Ms. Richardson]

has said, one of the worst in Europe. For example, our service requirements for maternity pay and leave are now so strict that only half of all pregnant women qualify, while fathers have no rights at all.

From January 1986, nine EEC countries, excluding this one, will have some form of parental leave provision. I ask Conservative Members to note that those countries have introduced this provision without waiting for the directive to come into effect. It does not come into force until January 1986. Some countries will have a provision that goes beyond that envisaged in the Commission's proposals. The Government have been hellbent on proposing wrecking amendments throughout the discussions, which have been taking place since November 1984. However, the basic essentials of the original proposals remain—thank goodness—and they have been accepted by most member states. There is to be a minimum of three months' parental leave consequential upon the birth or adoption of a child, with the option to take this part-time, and a minimum number of days' leave per annum—to be fixed by states—for pressing family reasons, to be available to mothers or fathers in paid employment. By taking governmental responsibility for such provision, all those member states are demonstrating their willingness to accept one of the most important principles underlying parental and family leave—that the sharing of family responsibilities is a precondition for the achievement of equal opportunities and equal treatment for women and men in all spheres.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): The hon. Lady is giving the impression that all the other European countries have been busy adopting this directive. How many countries have no such intention? I put it to her that there are four such countries out of the 12. How many of the remainder have taken up this option with unpaid leave, which is a totally different matter from the paid-by-the-state proposals that are before us? Is it not a fact that six countries have unpaid leave proposals and that only two have full paid leave proposals?

Ms. Richardson: I wonder whether the hon. Lady would mind waiting a little, because I intend to come to the list of countries that have these provisions. She will then get her answer.

The European Commission is encouraging member states to confront another fundamental issue facing the industrialised developed nations—the need radically to rethink the distribution of time spent on waged work and that spent on other responsibilities and activities.

Although still a minority, an increasing number of men are also rethinking their traditional role in the family. Many are rejecting the role which deprives them of the experience of caring for their children. They are expressing the desire to build a new type of relationship with their partner and their children. I should have thought that all hon. Members would welcome that.

Evidence shows that many men are refusing to follow the traditional path to promotion—for example, by uprooting their partner and children to chase every offer of career advancement around the country, or even out of the country, just to prove their worth to an employer and their dedication to their work. Many men, rightly, are challenging some of the outmoded notions about what it takes to be a real man. We should all welcome that.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does the hon. Lady believe in fairies?

Ms. Richardson: That is offensive. There are too many examples of the characteristic "real man." I can see a few on the Government Benches—thrusting, strutting, one-track minded macho types who neither know nor care who looks after the rest of society.

The Commission rightly proposes to harmonise provisions throughout member states to redress the imbalance in employment rights for working parents throughout the EEC, to eradicate discrimination against working fathers and to strengthen equal opportunities for women at work. The proposals should be welcomed and encouraged.

The proposals also offer the opportunity to improve the quality of child care that working parents can give in the early months after a child's birth. The acute shortages of nursery care in the United Kingdom cause distress particularly for single parents.

It is generally accepted that women's working lives are affected more than men's when a couple have children or when adult members of families require help. One in eight women is at home caring for elderly or infirm relatives. That is more than the number of women at home caring for children. Under pressure from Governments, such as ours, the Commission has withdrawn the proposal that family leave should encompass time off to care for an adult dependant.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Can the hon. Lady elaborate on the number of women at home caring for a relative? Does the number include the elderly wife of an elderly man looking after her husband at home and who would not be working outside because of her own age?

Ms. Richardson: My statistics come from the Association of Carers, the credentials of which are impeccable. Of course, the figure includes people caring for their partners. However, many women are caring for a relative at home when they might be out doing some form of paid work. That is because the community support system has been cut or withdrawn.

Employment conditions and the provision for social and community services fail to provide adequately for family responsibilities. Therefore, women returning to work after a career break often have to seek work in lower paid and lower status areas of employment. After having had a child many women who return to work have to enter a lower category of occupation. The 1980 survey of women and employment showed that broken employment patterns have a lasting effect upon women's lifetime earnings. Sometimes they involve a 25 to 50 per cent. reduction in earnings.

That illustrates the abysmally low value that employers place upon the skills and experience that people develop when they are caring for others and running a home. It illustrates also the massive waste of expensive training and the skills that women acquire in employment. Therefore, we regret the Government's view, which is implicit in the last part of their motion, that the Commission's proposals for parental and family leave run contrary to initiatives which enhance job prospects for both women and men.

Any Government who seriously sought to encourage job opportunities—not a claim that this Government could readily make—would face a long, hard haul to

bring this country back to full employment. Although a future Labour Government will seek to provide permanent employment for all who require it, we accept that, for a variety of reasons, there will always be a place for short-term or temporary employment. In West Germany it is estimated that when parental and sabbatical leave comes into effect in 1986, one year contracts may be made available for up to 200,000 people who are not in paid employment. Such opportunities would assist the unemployed, disabled workers who are unable to take on long-term employment commitments, workers who have taken early retirement but who wish to have occasional employment to boost their incomes and workers who have chosen to take a career break of several years to care for children or adult dependants and require only occasional employment to maintain their skills. Cover for colleagues who take parental leave may also offer opportunities for employees in junior grades to gain experience through temporary promotion. That would further reduce the need for people to transfer jobs and uproot their families.

Therefore, we reject the view that parental and family leave, although desirable, are far too costly to be implemented. The Government say that there is no economic crisis, so there should be no problem about this. Those who argue that luxuries like parental leave and family leave must wait for some distant economic revival fail to take into account the number of workers who could temporarily be removed from the need to depend upon social security while they cover leave. The Government are ignoring, too, the boost to personal morale that this would provide and the boost to the quality of life and purchasing power of all concerned.

We also reject the Government's view that the proposals can best be dealt with through

"voluntary negotiations between employers and employees."

That approach will discriminate against employees in the poorly organised, non-union sectors. The majority of workers in those sectors are low paid, and mainly women. Their existing minimal rights are being further eroded by the removal of those under 21 years of age from the protection of the wages councils, three quarters of whom are women. Even those workers who are protected by strong trade unions which are committed to equal opportunities—the Government have done everything in their power to weaken all trade unions — find that employers are unnecessarily obstructive about issues such as parental leave.

In its evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities in March this year, the National Union of Journalists—I hope that members of the Press Gallery are listening, although there are not many present—said:

"in spite of the strenuous efforts to improve these rights through free collective bargaining large numbers of employers are quite unreasonably resistant."

It went on to say that the result of this has been

"to reinforce the existing job segregation (between women and men) in an industry which has no conceivable skill-related reason to be segregated in this way. Without firm backing through legislation"—

such as that which we are discussing—

"it will take many years for the unions to eliminate these disparities at the negotiating table. It would, therefore, take a corresponding length of time for us to move closer to equality in the prestigious and higher paid jobs in the newspaper field. We believe that this constitutes a form of indirect discrimination against women and that our industry and our society is the poorer for it."

Similarly, we reject the view that parental and family leave would adversely affect the employers' ability to remain competitive. Even if we wished to apply the Government's "market mechanisms" and "balance sheet mentality", this would still encourage support for harmonised governmental responsibility throughout the EEC to ensure that employers who wish to demonstrate their commitment to equal opportunities and their social responsibility to working parents and their children are not penalised unfairly by an imbalance of competition from unscrupulous employers who refuse to negotiate.

The Opposition therefore urge the Government to take note of the opinions expressed by, among others, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Trades Union Congress, the Maternity Alliance, the British agencies for adoption and fostering, MENCAP, the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital, and the Royal College of Nursing, all of which have given support to the idea.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Richardson: No.

These organisations which represent the interests of working parents and children, will find it very hard to understand why the party that took the country into the EEC refuses to implement policies that so many other states have already accepted.

For those Conservative Members who are opposed to the Common Market, I point out that we need not have waited for the EC anyway.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) asked about figures. France offers two years of unpaid leave to either parent, or the right to work part-time for the same period and £100 to families with three or more children. Italy provides six months leave, paid at 30 per cent. to the mother or father. Denmark gives 10 weeks of paid parental leave. In Belgium, six to 12 months leave is available for the care of young children, and it may be taken part-time where cover is provided by a part-time worker who was previously unemployed. In Greece, employees of companies of more than 100 workers are entitled to three months parental leave.

Mrs. Currie: Unpaid.

Ms. Richardson: Yes, unpaid; but at least it is a step in the right direction.

In West Germany a new law on parental leave comes into effect in 1986, increasing the period of leave to 10 months, and then to 12 months from 1988. Leave is currently paid at £150 a month for women and there is extended maternity leave, but by next year that figure will be available to men also. In Luxembourg, public sector employees may take one year of unpaid leave, following maternity leave.

Portugal — not yet a member of the EC, but it becomes one in January—already provides six months' parental leave. Spain will also not become a member of the Community until January, but it allows up to three years' family leave. Italy, Greece, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain and Portugal all make a variety of provisions for family leave to care for sick children. Portugal provides for 30 days' leave covered by social security benefits.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms. Richardson: I do not want to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

[Ms. Richardson]

Can the British Government continue to argue that we cannot afford to implement these provisions? We think not. The working women and men in this country will be waiting for a decision from the House tonight which accepts that such socially desirable legislation cannot be costed merely on a pounds and pence basis. We remind hon. Members——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am the last person who would wish to interrupt the hon. Lady, but is this meant to be a debate or a lecture? If one is not allowed to question, why do we have a debate at all?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that the length of speeches is not my business.

Ms. Richardson: After the hon. Gentleman's offensive remark earlier, I decided not to give way to him. I will end what he calls my lecture by quoting from the House of Lords Select Committee which found that there was

"no convincing evidence that parental leave would raise industry's costs."

The Committee recommended that

"any increased costs should be met in part by governments"

to ensure that the important social objectives of promoting equal opportunities for women — something that Tory Members do not know about—and improving child care can be met.

I could not express it better. I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote for our amendment, and I hope that some Conservative Members will be shamed into joining us.

10.42 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I shall not take up many of the points made by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), but when she listed the terms and conditions of employment in various European countries she appeared to overlook the relationship between export performance in those countries and the need to be competitive. If the hon. Lady will ponder a while on the percentage of our GDP that goes on exports she may understand why we have to find our own way on competitiveness and burdens on business.

In the interests of brevity, I shall confine my remarks to parental leave. I believe that leave for family reasons should be subject to negotiation between employer and employee. I welcome what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said about the directive and particularly his comment that it was bad for jobs. I am reassured that the Government's position has not changed from what was set out in January 1984 by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he was at the Department of Employment.

Few would argue against the principles of equal opportunity in society for women, of shared responsibilities and particularly of equality of treatment at work. Those were the Commission's objectives in 1982 when the directive was included as part of the Community action programme. There is no disputing the attraction of those objectives as a broad statement of intent, but they lacked any sense of realism about the way in which the labour market works and there is still no evidence of that realism.

The directive aims at social ideals, apparently without the slightest recognition of the disruption in the work place, the added costs to employers or the taxpayer and the disincentive to take on young married workers which would inevitably follow.

Against those eventualities it seems remarkable that the Council should persist with the directive at a time when each member of the Community faces awesome problems of unemployment. Each member state needs to ensure that its industries compete more effectively on world markets to secure lasting jobs. Every Government within the Community now recognises that the control of inflation and lowering industrial costs is the only sure way to reduce unemployment. Yet the directive clearly embraces entirely different notions. Paragraph 5 states:

> "Parental leave . . . as a form of leave of absence from work . . . can . . . make a useful contribution to the reduction of unemployment by promoting voluntary . . . withdrawal . . . from the labour market."

In other words, the directive advocates social engineering to tackle unemployment, and has in reality little to do with women's rights.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is it not a fact that the Labour party thinks that a married woman can pop in and out of work virtually as she pleases? Many of us who employ ladies realise that they are valued employees who are essential to our businesses and who need to be at work rather than at home.

Mr. Wardle: I am glad to hear a note of realism introduced in support of my remarks. It is regrettable if Opposition Members feel that they can set aside any concern about the methods of tacking unemployment.

The sort of back-door interference advocated in the directive will do nothing to solve the unemployment problem. It is high time that the authors of the directive paid heed to the economic policies of the member states. The directive would merely result in a failure, which discredited other genuine efforts on behalf of equal opportunities for women.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, the directive proposes that men and women should be entitled to voluntary leave. [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I shall continue to read whenever it suits me to do so, in spite of the mood of liberty on the Opposition Benches. My hon. Friend pointed out that all part-time employees should qualify and that the maximum qualifying period should not exceed one year. Apart from the fact that that would mean that the amendments were against the tide of recent changes in the Employment Protection Act 1975, the measures proposed would increase the intake of qualifiers far beyond the present scope of maternity leave. It would also add considerably to industry's costs, whether directly or indirectly.

It is worth noting that during 1984 in Sweden the cost of parental leave was estimated at 1·5 per cent. of the total wages bill. Faced with such an outlay, the Government surely would have to transfer the burden to employers, which in turn could have a critical marginal effect on the cost of goods sold in highly competitive markets, in much the same way as the national insurance surcharge—the tax on jobs—under the Labour Government.

The report on parental leave published earlier this year by the House of Lords Select Committee seems to have been much taken with the objectives of the Council's directive but had little regard to the attendant costs, in spite of the persuasive evidence provided by the Confederation of British Industry and other witnesses to the contrary.

Paragraph 115(3) of the report concludes that there is no evidence that parental leave would raise industry's costs, but paragraph 115(6) states that those costs should be paid for by public funds. Who will have to reimburse public funds other than industry?

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Taxpayers.

Mr. Wardle: Opposition Members presumably like to assume that businesses are not taxpayers.

There are three practical reasons why that will inhibit the growth of employment in otherwise successful businesses. First, it will cause disruption in small companies, and the large companies whose employee strength was pared to the bone during the recession. Individual shops and departments in those companies have no reserves to turn to, if men and part-time female employees, as well as full-time female employees, take advantage of parental leave.

Secondly, business men are pragmatic, and never more so than since the recession. Therefore——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I ask my hon. Friend to assist me as a simple seeker of the truth. He is making an excellent speech and I ask him whether the problem is that the Common Market organisation, which brought this nonsense forward, would be improved if at least a third of the staff had three years off for paternity leave or any other reason. How different that would be for industry, which would have to pay for this nonsense. Perhaps my hon. Friend will comment on that.

Mr. Wardle: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Whether I should recommend that which the staff would have to do to qualify for parental leave is something that I shall leave to my hon. Friend.

I was saying that business men are pragmatic. The result of the scheme would be to ensure that the fruits of the YTS would be lost instantly. Young persons would be avoided like the plague by employers because of the inevitable consequences. Finally, the scheme would run contrary to the excellent spirit of the Government's policy of lifting the burden from business, which is the way to create jobs. The answer does not lie in the imposition of further administrative burdens by the European Community.

10.56 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): The behaviour of some Conservative Members is appalling. It is amazing that they treat the issue before us as a frivolous subject. That is their approach to debates on roles in society and women's rights. It is shocking.

The proposal before us is a logical extension of maternity leave, which was initially accepted reluctantly by British businesses. The chief beneficiary would be women who are in employment, especially those in single-parent families. There is no great opposition to the provision of maternity leave within our society. The report of the Select Committee on the European Communities in another place found that only 5 per cent. of employers felt that there would be a substantial problem with maternity leave. The study concluded by stating:

"in view of the controversy that has surrounded maternity rights in general and the right to reinstatement in particular, the extent to which managers reported any difficulty over the provisions since their introduction is surprisingly low."

The concept is not the same as family-reason leave, to which many firms are sympathetic and which arises capriciously. We are dealing especially with parental leave in the first two years of a child's life. Conservative Members have suggested that a huge change is proposed and that it would make a massive change to business practice and to industry. I am sure that that would not be the effect of the proposed change. It would affect about 1 per cent. of men who are in employment and 2 per cent. of women.

It is suggested that small firms with fewer than 20 employees should be exempt in the first instance. In other words, the firms involved would have the capacity to deal with that which is proposed because of the flexibility of employment within them. The issue that arises is whether the proposals before us would be detrimental to employment. The fears of the cost to industry are unfounded. If women did not return to good jobs after having children, businesses would lose their experience, knowledge and training. If enlightened businesses and employers were aware that it would help them to retrain trained, experienced and knowledgeable employees, they would be assisted in developing their businesses and the output of them.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is difficult to retain good will if employers think that all their employees are going to hop off for up to three years? Surely, the point is that it is not just businesses employing 20 people that have to be considered. One must consider the fact that some people will go to the bigger businesses because they know that they are an easier touch. When will the hon. Gentleman think of all businesses?

Mr. Meadowcroft: I accept the problem that the hon. Gentleman has raised. It is a choice between having a regular turnover, particularly of women because they will not return to jobs after having children, or retaining workers and letting them have leave for a number of months within the first two years of a child's life. That is a matter of balance. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will listen to the reply rather than being bothered by interruptions. He may feel that it is better to let women employees go after they have had children and not come back. One then loses their training and experience.

Mr. Favell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meadowcroft: Let me continue. Essentially, it is a matter of women's rights and changes in the balance of society. It is a matter of changing the stereotypes in society because that will assist men to get back into the home looking after children if they so wish. It is a matter of assisting the different roles in society and assisting women to develop their own roles.

Mr. Favell: Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that if the right is given to married women to pop in and out of work as they please, it will make them eminently less employable? Many small employers will avoid them like the plague.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I find it hard to believe that employers in other countries, who at least have a measure of these provisions, are worse and less enlightened than employers in Britain. I am astonished that the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is true. He takes a low view of employers and employees in this country.

Mr. Marlow: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that a far higher proportion of women are employed in Britain than in other European countries, so there is a greater impact. That also shows that employers in this country are better employers of women than in other European countries.

Mr. Meadowcroft: If one believes that the only way to get good employment practice—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There are far too many interruptions from a sedentary position. There is a proper way to intervene. I hope that hon. Members will observe it.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I feel that some people who intervene do not want to hear the answers.

If the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) believes that the only way to get employees to behave themselves, to work full hours and to earn a living, is by employers imposing upon them, we shall never have good labour relations. We must develop the best relationship. Essentially, the proposition is not for 21st century labour relations. It is more like Quakerism from the 19th century. The proposal improves the outlook for enlightened employers' employees by giving them better social conditions. There is nothing revolutionary about that. I hope that employers in Britain will accept that it could be of benefit to them.

This issue is a suitable subject for legislation because I do not believe that one will achieve such a change

without putting the force of legislation behind enlightened views. If that was not the case, I would not want legislation. I have not seen evidence around the country of employers being prepared to give parental leave out of good will. I have not seen any examples of negotiations between unions and employers. Therefore, the measure seems to be a good thing. This is a good subject for legislation because at least an equal burden is placed on employers, if they believe that it is a burden. That is good if it makes the system fair.

The measure will be beneficial for our society if we can extend our provision. There is a financial cost for all improvements that are made in society. The balance must be considered when one is thinking about how far to go at any time. It saddens me that Conservative Members deride the measure, as if it were not a social improvement rather than trying to balance the advantages against the costs. That is what we should do.

11.1 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): We have discovered something today — that the European Community, where it initiates its own policies and where those policies are not brought forward by Governments and Ministers representing the people, appeals greatly to Opposition Members. The bureaucrats in the European Community who bring forward those policies are Socialists. That is why the Labour party is attracted to the measure.

I have a reputation—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."]—an undeserved reputation, for being anti-European. It is a calumny. It is not true. I am in favour of co-operation with Europe on foreign policy, and in defence, and I am in favour of removing barriers to the movement of goods. I am in favour of working together with other European countries in areas of major investment so that we can compete with the rest of the world, but I am not in favour of the petty regulations that come forward. I am not in favour of the growing burden of Socialism that is spawned by the Commission in Brussels, to which we in the Conservative party object strongly.

With other hon. Members, I went recently with the Select Committee on European Legislation to Brussels. I met people in the Commission. We know what they are —intelligent people who want a sense of achievement out of the job that they are doing and feel that the only way that they can get it is by changing the world and bringing forward policies. This is one of those policies. It has come from the Commission, from the bureaucracy, and it is supported by many countries in Europe, because many countries in Europe are Socialist. We are not a Socialist country, nor will we ever become one again. This is just the sort of policy of which we in this country disapprove.

I ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary: is the measure ultra vires? Is it an area in which the Community should have competence? If not, I believe that the Government should challenge it in the courts. We do not want this creeping bureaucracy. We do not want these additional burdens put upon us. Gracious me, we have a brand-new Secretary of State for Employment who is trying to liberate and free industry. The measure is something that we do not want.

Any good employer will want to look after his employees. Any good employer whose female staff have a child will look after them, will want to have them back, will want to make sure that they are properly treated. However, some businesses, enterprises, firms and industries are different from others. They have different requirements for their employees, and so treat them slightly differently.

In this case, we are saying that there should be imposed upon every employer a system of parental leave, whereby mothers have leave of at least three months at a stretch up to two years after the child is born. That is in addition to maternity leave. When the mother is not in work an allowance may be payable by Government, but on top of that, her stamp will have to be paid by them. Therefore, the measure will have to be paid for by the Government and the taxpayer. In addition, the time that mothers are off sick while on parental leave does not count. If they have other children at home, if their husband is ill or if there are family problems, they can take time off on family leave.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can visualise that some employees will not be as enthusiastic as they should be about going to work, but will stretch this out over a long period of time. They will be unsatisfactory employees, and the employer—because he wants to remain competitive —will not want to continue to employ these people. But if he does anything about it, he can be taken to court. This whole thing will be an obstacle course for employers. A good employer will look after his staff anyhow, and it is the good employers who, by and large, prosper and deserve to prosper.

Dame Jill Knight: Is my hon. Friend aware of the common practice in the midlands, whereby in many large factories a minimum amount of sick leave is allowed during the year? It is common for employees to take all that time, whether they are ill or not. Frequently, many people who become ill have already used up all their sick leave.

Mr. Marlow: As usual, my hon. Friend makes a cogent and valid point. All Conservative Members know that the good employer will do the thing properly and will look after his staff. It is in his interests to look after his staff, and he becomes successful because he looks after his staff. But if we impose this statutory burden on all employers, we shall lose our level of competitiveness, we shall lose our share of world markets and we shall lose jobs.

The point made by my hon. Friend the Minister, which is very important, is that employers will be reluctant to employ the very people whom the Opposition want them to take on. They will be reluctant to take on young women, because they will feel that, if they do so, they will have a lifetime of problems ahead of them. This measure is nonsense. It is Socialist nonsense, and I was delighted with the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister.

11.7 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Britain has a deeply segregated work force. In any office, industry or service, there are men's jobs and women's jobs. Although each sector has exceptions, with women doing what are normally regarded as men's jobs, or men doing what are normally regarded as women's jobs, overall the pattern is deeply ingrained. Not only do we have deep sex segregation in the work force, but we have deeply entrenched discrimination in the pattern of employment between men and women. Men and women often work

[Ms. Harriet Harman]

different hours. For example, it is not unusual for men to work 35 or 40-hour weeks with plenty of overtime, yet many women work part-time in local jobs, which usually have low pay and no prospects.

A primary reason for that is the division of labour in the home. A fundamental obstacle to equality for women in the work force is the division of labour in the home. It is no good men groaning and saying, "But I help out at home from time to time." Anyone with any sense can see, and all the Government's surveys have shown, that women take responsibility for maintaining the household and, more importantly for rearing children. In the absence of proper public services to support families where there are small children or dependent relatives, it is to other women —usually friends or more often relatives—that women turn for help.

Britain has a chronic problem of male absenteeism from the home. We must crack that problem. How can women have equal opportunities to participate at work and in other activities outside the home if their unshared domestic responsibility will always hold them back from achieving anything, let alone their full potential, outside the home? The normal—that is to say, the male—working pattern completely denies and excludes the father's role as a parent, and at the same time it exploits the wife. A man with small children can work a 35-hour week with plenty of overtime only if he has a wife servicing him and his family—a wife who will get the children up, take them to school, go to work, shop in her lunch hour, go back to work again, take the children home from school, make their dinner, get his dinner on the table, put the children to bed, wash up, do his washing and then go to bed herself. Where a woman is servicing a husband, a home and a family, her scope for taking up further opportunities at work is severely limited.

We have to look at ways of changing the patterns of employment, and parental or family leave taken either by the husband or the wife is an important step down that path. Women as part of the work force are here to stay. There will be no going back to the kitchen. Only 5 per cent. of families conform to the myth of the husband going to work and the wife staying at home to look after two children. Women work because they want to, because they need to and because we need their work. If women went back to the home there is not an industry, an office or a service that would not grind to a halt.

The pattern of work obviously discriminates against women. It also discriminates against men because it discriminates against those men who want to play a more responsible part in bringing up their own children. Some men suffer and are unhappy because they are prevented from doing so by having to work all hours and cannot take time off for family responsibilities.

11.11 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I wish to support the stand taken by the Government against this silly proposal and I hope the House throws it out with more determination than the other place did in March when it was debated.

To suggest that the House should grant at least the three months parental leave on top of maternity leave, for both parents, paid for by the State, is extravagant, unrealistic and destructive. It is a product of bureaucracy gone mad, dreamt up by the people in Brussels who have never employed anyone, never run a business, never had to balance a budget either in the public or the private sector and never had to face unemployment because their employer could no longer afford to employ them.

There have been strong objections from the CBI and other employers on the ground of cost. The proposal is that the state should pay and it would not add to cost. My hon. Friends are right—it would add to costs, because the companies would have all the expenses of replacement, retraining and administration. The money would come from the the social security system. The proposal is that we should raise the employers' and employees' contributions to pay for it. This week we have added £2 billion to the social security costs of over £40 billion. If the Government make any proposals to reduce that bill, the Opposition wll cry out, as if we were going to do something dreadful. Just as the Government are trying to cut the cost of national insurance contributions and of employing people, this proposal would try to increase those costs. The employee would pay in one way or another—in tax, national insurance or with his job.

The proposal would also have the most disastrous effects upon industrial competitiveness.

Ms. Clare Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): That happens throughout the whole of Europe.

Mrs. Currie: I hoped someone would mention Europe. The Aldington report and other reports from the House of Lords have proved that we cannot take any of our markets for granted. No other country in Europe can do that either. We should be aware that we are competing with countries outside the Common Market.

The proposal would not involve harmonisation of the 12 European countries. Four of them — the United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands and Spain — have no such scheme. Six of them—France, Germany, Greece, Belgium, Portugal and Luxembourg—have a scheme for unpaid leave. France has a scheme for paid leave, but it applies only to families with more than three children and it works out at only 1,000 francs a month, which is not a lot of money. Germany's scheme of paid leave involves only the private sector; it refers only to the mother and is roughly the same as our maternity leave scheme. Whatever the German civil service has been up to, it has not been looking after its own staff because its scheme does not apply to the public sector there.

Only two countries—Italy and Denmark—have such a scheme of payments. Italy allows a payment of 30 per cent. of average earnings, which is not a strong incentive to people to take it up. In July, Denmark introduced a new law that allows 90 per cent. of average earnings to be paid. It will be interesting to see what effect that has on Denmark's birth rate. The mind boggles at paying a man to be fecund, which is what that amounts to.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am reluctant to intervene in my hon. Friend's admirably constructive speech, but does not the concentration on maternity leave underestimate by far the largest demand for leave for family reasons, from the very large number of people with injured and disabld relatives? Does my hon. Friend agree that leave of that kind should be negotiated between employers and employees, because it is a very serious area of concern?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. But the proposals for family leave include time off to go to family weddings. I do not think that that is a matter for the state to interfere in or to pay for at all.

The effect on cost might be modified by the take-up. Paragraph 7 of the explanatory memorandum to the draft directive states that Sweden has had such a scheme for a long time but that it has taken several years for the take-up to rise to 13 per cent. In other words, more than 80 per cent. of Swedish men take no notice of schemes of this kind because they take their responsibilities to their companies very seriously.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): So what is the hon. Lady worried about?

Mrs. Currie: If the scheme is going to be so ineffective, why bother legislating for it? Why not leave it to the companies to do it themselves?

The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) referred to journalists. I suspect that somewhere in one or two of the unions someone cares about all this. The TUC has said that it is in favour—but then it would say that, would it not? Down the road at the *Daily Mirror* this week there have been negotiations about terms of employment and all the rest of it, but I bet that no one has mentioned the essential urgent requirement for parental leave. There has been not a jot of it. None of the unions has bothered to negotiate anything like this. They could not care less until someone else is going to pay for it.

We are also told that the Equal Opportunities Commission is in favour. I expect that there are people from that organisation sitting up in the Strangers Gallery. I hope that they will listen——

Mr. Deputy Speaker Order. The hon. Lady knows that she must not refer to people in the Strangers Gallery.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Those are the people she is talking to.

Mrs. Currie: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not know that.

I despair of that ragbag of a body which finds it so easy to waste time and public money fiddling around with stuff like this. It merely encourages women to think that equality grows out of a law book, when it does not. It comes from women taking the opportunities open to them and making the best of them. It comes when women face the demands of a responsible job and, like the men, ensure that they have made their arrangements accordingly. It comes when women stop asking for special concessions and special rules and make sure that they are good enough to take the men on at their own jobs and beat them.

The Federation of Business and Professional Women, which involves both employees and employers, is dead against the proposals. It says that they are counterproductive and that they will prejudice the employment especially of women, just as the employment protection legislation has done. The bulk of growth in employment in the past two or three years has been in part-timers and the self-employed — people not covered by those Acts. Legislation designed to protect the work force has merely succeeded in reducing it.

Finally, we must consider whether proposals of this kind fulfil the objective, with which we all agree, of supporting the family. If they were effective, which I doubt, they might just encourage more mothers with tiny children—this will apply only to children under two years old—to work full time. In all honesty, I cannot see how that helps the family or the children. If we are serious about supporting the family, there are all sorts of other things that we can do, such as correcting the tax anomalies which encourage wives to go out to work and penalise those who stay at home.

Children are the responsibility of their parents. We choose to have them and we choose how we care for them. They are not the responsibility of the state or of the employer. I fully support the Government.

11.19 pm

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): No Conservative Member would miss his or her daughter's wedding to come to the House. They would put their top hats on and leave their nannies to look after their little children to go to the wedding. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members can shout all they like, but they show that they do not understand how ordinary people live.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said that not one union has negotiated an agreement such as is proposed. My union — the National Communications Union — has. It has produced a maternity package because of the great need. The Common Market proposals are good and the Government are blocking them for no good reason. It is right that both parents should have time off to look after their nippers without risk of losing their jobs.

The proposals make it easier for women to work. I believe that women have the right to work. The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South talked of a woman going to work rather than staying at home to look after a two-year-old nipper. She does not know the poverty and hardship that will drive a woman to go out to work rather than look after her baby. That is what Conservative Members do not understand.

I know that there is high unemployment, but the problem is not to be solved at the expense of working women. The responsibility for that unemployment lies with the Treasury Bench and Ministers, not with women. It is important that, after childbirth, women should be able to adjust to going back to work. It is clear to the trade unions that, if women are to have equal opportunity at work, childbirth must not be a barrier. I am not talking of any old work. Women are entitled to work that matches their experience and training. That is why the National Communications Union is anxious to secure satisfactory arrangements.

The number of single-parent families is increasing, and such parents must have work. We are talking not about pin money but about whether people can afford to pay the rent. They have to go to work. Many families cannot get a mortgage without two incomes. Housing depends upon it. For many women, work provides an escape from the house. Women often go to work because they need the social contact.

Conservative Members live in the world of nannies, prep schools and public schools. Their wives leave the children with the nanny to go to Ascot or Henley. Their wives leave the kids at home and enjoy themselves—I do not blame them. The women I represent have to leave the nippers at home to go out to work. That is the difference between the two sides of the House and why

[Mr. John Golding]

Conservative Members have been so badly behaved throughout the debate. They do not realise the seriousness of the situation.

Why do the Government refuse to support the proposals? Because their paymasters at the last general election — the employers — have told them to do so. There is no point going to most employers to ask them for these concessions. If it had been left to the employers, kids would still be going down the mines and up chimneys. The employers were forced to change only by legislation. The only way in which parents, especially women, will get a fair deal, given the antiquated attitude of the Tory party, is through the implementation of the directive and other legislation.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark *rose——*

11.25 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) for cutting him out of the debate, but I suspect that he has contributed as much as those hon. Members who have been called.

The hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) contradicted himself in his remarks on parental leave and his union's negotiations. I wish to say in passing that I owe him an apology for mixing up his union with another.

The hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) spoke of grasping at straws. She demonstrated one important point, which is the need to help people reconcile and balance their home and work responsibilities. She mentioned care for elderly dependants, an issue of which more people should be aware — especially the burden that many people, mainly women, carry. Indeed, many women spend more time caring for elderly dependants than caring for children. Perhaps it will be possible to return to that issue on another occasion. However, the hon. Lady demonstrated that European directives are not required in that or other areas.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: In view of this most bizarre debate on this incredible subject, I ask my hon. Friend to address his mind to one question—does he really think that the Common Market has the right to decide this internal affair? Are we to have one nonsensical debate after another? Why do we not tell the EEC to mind its own business and that we will run our country as we think best for the British people?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend raises a point also raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) about the legality of the proposal. The Government, for the moment, prefer to concentrate on the practical question of the best way to promote opportunities for men and women. We want to persuade our partners in Europe, as well as hon. Members, that this proposal is not the way to do that.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend rightly said that this is a nonsensical proposal that we regard as rubbish. He made a super speech. Will he guarantee that in the discussions in Brussels on majority voting — which I understand will apply to article 100 regulations, to which this proposal relates — the Government will not allow Greece, Portugal, Spain and a majority of countries to impose this proposal on the United Kingdom, whether Parliament wants it or not? Will the Government stand firm?

Mr. Bottomley: I undertake that one of my colleagues will write to my hon. Friend on that matter.

I want to correct an impression given in the admirable speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie). I am sure that she will wish to reconsider her remarks about the Equal Opportunities Commission——

Mrs. Currie: No. I happen to believe what I said.

Mr. Bottomley: I happen to believe that the commission is helpful to employers, and its code of practice has been warmly welcomed by the CBI. It does valuable work in encouraging women in skill shortage areas. We value its views on issues, even if we do not always agree.

It is worth mentioning that on 8 May I gave a list of European directives that had been accepted since 1979. Only one of them relates to employment protection, and I do not think that it could be regarded as social engineering. I said sufficient earlier to show that this proposal would be social engineering because no European country has the same provisions as any other, so there is a diversity of views among the countries. Indeed, the House has demonstrated the diversity of view within it as well as within the country.

We could have picked up many points from the debate, but I think that it is best to state plainly that we believe that the proposal should not be pursued. The issue will be discussed again by the Council on 5 December, but I do not think that final decisions will be reached because a number of important issues still divide the states, including our objection on principle as well as on practice.

I have explained that our objection flows from the fact that our overriding priority is to improve job opportunities for men and women. It is in that spirit that I trust that the Council will approach the issue on 5 December. If it is interested, it can look at the figures which show that, over a considerable period, the growth of jobs in this country has been greater than in the rest of Europe put together. It is well worth people recognising that many of those jobs have been for women. I think that we have been doing well. I advise the House to reject the amendment, and I invite hon. Members to support the Government's motion.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 120, Noes 177.

Division No. 11] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Alton, David	Caborn, Richard
Anderson, Donald	Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Ashton, Joe	Campbell-Savours, Dale
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Carter-Jones, Lewis
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clarke, Thomas
Barnett, Guy	Clay, Robert
Barron, Kevin	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Cohen, Harry
Bell, Stuart	Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Corbyn, Jeremy
Blair, Anthony	Cunliffe, Lawrence
Boyes, Roland	Dalyell, Tam
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*	Deakins, Eric
Buchan, Norman	Dobson, Frank

Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Parry, Robert
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, M.
Richardson, Ms Jo
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Mark Fisher and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Marcus
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hayes, J.
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Jessel, Toby
Key, Robert
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, T. H. H.
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 11118/83 and 10681/84, draft Directive and amended draft Directive on parental leave and leave for family reasons; endorses the Government's view that these matters are best pursued by voluntary negotiations between employers and employees; and welcomes the United Kingdom's endeavours to encourage instead Community initiatives which enhance job prospects for men and women.

Rail Services (Bradford)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Peter Lloyd.*]

11.41 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss Bradford's rail services. To understand the mounting concern in Bradford about rail services it is necessary to explain the city's unemployment crisis, the efforts that are being made to regenerate the city's economy and the city's anxiety about resources being deployed with a wrong sense of direction and priority.

The jobs crisis is massive. During the period 1961 to 1978, manufacturing industry in Bradford lost 54,000 jobs, 45,000 of them in textiles alone. Between 1978 and 1981 a further 23,000 jobs in manufacturing industry were lost, 16,000 of them in textiles. The rate of unemployment has increased from 2 per cent. in 1974 to 16 per cent. in 1985, and 35,000 men and women are desperately looking for work. Wage levels remain well below the regional and national averages. The result is that millions of pounds have been taken out of the pockets of the men and women of Bradford and the rates revenue of the local authority has rapidly diminished.

Car ownership in Bradford is very low. Only half of the families in the district own a car. There is substantial poverty and extensive deprivation. But the people of Bradford have a gritty independence. They want to help themselves. However, they are rapidly coming to the conclusion that although the Government have offered support to enable the people of Bradford to help themselves their help is inadequate. It is not being provided with the sense of urgency and commitment that the people of Bradford believe to be necessary. We have seen the city council, which is the city's largest employer, losing millions in rate support grant and paying millions to the Government in rate penalty. We have seen the university, the city's second biggest employer, suffering extensive cuts in 1981 and having to pay for substantial redundancies, and we have seen other unacceptable consequences as a result of those cuts, which are estimated to have taken another £6 million out of the local economy. All these pressures have led to extensive efforts being made by the city employers and others to diversify, to compensate for the losses experienced by manufacturing industry, by expansion of the service employment, especially in tourism.

Transport services are obviously of vital importance to the city, and this concern led Bradford council and British Rail to enter a joint review of inter-city services and to issue a joint report recently. The report highlighted the importance of transport, particularly rail services to Bradford, and the extensive and mounting concern about the future of our rail services in the city.

The chamber of commerce, trade unions, including the Transport and General Workers Union, by which I am sponsored, the Confederation of British Industry and many others, have stressed the importance that they attach to improving the transport services. The CBI, at its annual conference recently in Harrogate, devoted a considerable amount of time urging the Government to spend more on public works of all sorts, and there were numerous references to the need to improve transport services.

Bradford should have one of the best rail services in Britain, and should not be condemned to having one of the worst. Bradfordians using public transport, including rail services to work, business or pleasure are entitled to services that are reasonably priced, comfortable and convenient. Sadly, this is not the case today, and unless the Government intervene, the prospects are that Bradfordians will be asked to pay higher fares for an increasingly third class service.

It would be ludicrous for the line between Bradford and Leeds not to be electrified when the line between Leeds and the east coast main line is to be electrified, we hope by 1989. The investment for that electrification amounts to more than £300 million. The Government must find a way to give British Rail the £4 million that it needs to electrify the Bradford to Leeds line. The Government must ensure that British Rail expands the direct inter-city service between Bradford and London, which is now worse than it was 20 years ago.

The joint report prepared by Bradford city council and BR, commenting on inter-city services, said that 10 years ago there were five through trains from Bradford to London, and six in the opposite direction. Now, there are three in each direction, all via Leeds.

"It is unfortunate . . . that the Inter City service to and from London is worse in 1985 than it was in 1965. Industrialists comment about the length of time it takes to get from London to Bradford when a change has to be made at Leeds. They also criticise the scruffy, slow and often crowded nature of the link between Leeds and Bradford. Conferences are being, and have been lost because of the declining rail service between Bradford and London. Most tourists come by coach or car . . . Journey time, comfort and convenience by rail from London particularly, are important for many new and developing industries. At the present time, Bradford is at a great disadvantage. Decision makers and investors will not be attracted to Bradford if it becomes the largest city in the country without an Inter City rail service, or if it retains the worst Inter City rail service of any of the top six metropolitan districts in the country."

That is a succinct description of the concern in Bradford about rail services and particularly about the inter-city service.

Over the years, the declining rail service has had spin-off effects on other services. The Bradford post and telecom advisory committee wrote recently to a senior executive at the Post Office expressing concern that Bradford had been excluded from the new dedicated inter-city transport service, which will be operating between the main cities of this country. The letter said:

"We have recently reached the stage where the 19.43 Bradford/Kings Cross train has been withdrawn and vans are having to be sent to Sheffield and York to catch trains there. This means that the evening posting time has had to be advanced in some districts by at least half an hour. This causes tremendous inconvenience to the business community who would normally be posting between 5.00 and 5.30 pm and who how have to get their mail to the Post Office before 5.00 pm.

We find it difficult to understand why Bradford has been excluded from the new service, yet Leeds with a far better transport network has been included. Surely it would be preferable to include in the dedicated service those large cities which are suffering from a poor network."

I raised the issue recently with a Department of Trade and Industry Minister and I regret very much that he gave me a dismissive and off-hand reply, saying that he was not prepared to raise the matter with the chairman of the Post Office.

The Government must take action to ensure that local rail services are maintained. The usual spiral of deteriorating services, leading to fewer passengers, trains being axed and lines being closed, must not be allowed.

There is also mounting concern about services to Keighley and Ilkley, and it is a genuine based anxiety. Clear assurances must be given by the Government. They must take action to ensure that those services are not only maintained, but improved.

The Government must recognise the vital importance of all transport services and do everything possible to find the money necessary to maintain and improve Bradford's services. The city council has suggested that we need an interdepartmental Government task force, representing the Departments of Transport, the Environment and Trade and Industry to ensure a joint Government approach so that our transport services, particularly the rail services, can be defended and improved.

Ministers visit Bradford fairly frequently, but not many travel by train and few experience the overcrowded, uncomfortable and inconvenient arrangements suffered by most passengers on trains from Leeds to Bradford. I urge the Under-Secretary to come to Bradford to meet the city council and discuss its proposals for ensuring that the Leeds-Bradford line is electrified, and its proposals for maintaining and improving the inter-city service. Such a visit would be welcomed by the council and would give the Minister some experience of conditions for passengers between London and Bradford.

Good transport, including a good modern rail service, is central to Bradford's efforts in providing new jobs, encouraging existing firms to expand or new firms to come to Bradford and in attracting visitors to the city.

I end by quoting a good editorial in the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* on 5 November:

"If short-term, cost-cutting economic factors are the sole consideration in deciding whether or not to keep open the nation's main transport arteries, we are likely to end up with a few highly prosperous major cities, such as Leeds, surrounded by vast areas of neglect such as Bradford.

We believe it is time for the Government to take a longer-term, social view, before cities like ours are allowed to sink further into decline."

That view is generally held in Bradford, and the Minister can help to dispel it tonight. He can only hope to do so by promising action and cash. We are told that BR cannot electrify the line between Bradford and Leeds because of the stringent financial controls imposed by the Government, and that BR must show a proper rate of return on any investment made to proceed with that investment.

For those reasons and arguments, to give hope to Bradford, to give positive and practical help to back up the self-help it is already involved in, to try to overcome the unemployment crisis, and to help our efforts to revive our economy, I appeal to the Minister tonight to give clear assurances that he places the highest priority on ensuring that our rail and transport services are saved. That is what the people of Bradford want to hear. I hope that he can give those assurances in his reply.

11.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) has told the House about rail services to Bradford, and the general economic prospects of that city. I can well understand the desire of his constituents, and those visiting Bradford by rail, to be able to use good quality rail services. I can also understand their concern at changes in service levels and their worries about those levels in future. I am sure that they will be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the concern that he has shown on their behalf and for raising this matter this evening.

I must make it absolutely clear at the outset that the quality and level of services on particular routes, and the timetabling of those services, are matters entirely for the Railways Board. Ministers have no powers to intervene.

The Government are responsible for setting the broad strategic objectives for the Railway Board, and we take a close interest in the progress that the board makes towards achieving those objectives. We have made it clear that we consider that the railway has a vital role to play in our national transport arrangements.

Our aim is to see the development of a modern and efficient railway system, which provides good value for money to passengers and taxpayers alike. That aim is reflected in the guiding objectives that we have given to the chairman of the Railways Board. We have also told him that rail services should be reliable, attractive and punctual. They should be at acceptable fares and charges, and the cost to the taxpayer should be reduced. We believe that that is the way to achieve a secure future for the railway and to permit worthwhile investment to go ahead.

In addition to those guiding objectives, we have set the Railways Board a number of specific business targets, including targets for its inter-city sector, and for that part of its passenger business which is supported by central Government grant through the public service obligation.

Successive Governments have followed a firm policy that there is no justification for subsidising inter-urban transport, whether it is provided by rail, road or air. The Government have followed this policy, and have built on it by giving British Rail's inter-city sector a commercial target. We have asked the chairman to ensure that the sector achieves a 5 per cent. return on its assets by 1988-89. We have also said that from 1 April 1988 onwards the sector will be ineligible for public service obligation grant.

This approach is consistent with our policy towards domestic airline services and long-distance coach operations. All three modes of transport are in competition. There is no case for favouring one at the expense of another. We believe that this competition will spur the operators towards providing attractive services, which travellers want, and in a manner that is efficient in its use of resources. BR's inter-city sector is already under a strong challenge from airline and coach operators and I emphasise that it is beginning to respond well.

I must stress, however, that the nature of the response, and the way in which BR works towards achieving the target is for the railways board. It is responsible for managing the railway. It must use its commercial judgment in determining such matters as service levels, including those to cities such as Bradford.

I turn to the specific points raised by the hon. Member, especially his concern at the recent reduction in direct inter-city services between Bradford and London. I understand that prior to 30 September, BR ran three through services in each direction on each weekday. I understand also that from 30 September, BR withdrew the weekday evening train to London and arranged for one of the evening trains from London to be terminated at Leeds. I believe that these changes were introduced because of light passenger loadings between Bradford and Leeds.

As I have already explained, these changes, and the judgments underlying them, are the responsibility of the

[Mr. Michael Spicer]

Railways Board. It is not for me to second-guess its decisions. However, I do note that it is continuing to cater for travellers who would formerly have used these direct evening services. I understand that it is providing connecting services to Bradford for passengers arriving at Leeds, and is providing a service from Bradford to Doncaster to enable Bradford passengers to connect with the Edinburgh to London services on the east coast main line.

There is also some good news for Bradford inter-city passengers. First, the prestige "Yorkshire Pullman", which starts from Leeds in the morning and runs through to Bradford in the evening, has, I understand, been very successful. As a result first-class business travel to Yorkshire has increased significantly. This service should be beneficial to the economy of Bradford and the surrounding area.

It is worth remembering that through trains from Bradford to London take 176 minutes for 195 miles, an average speed of 66 mph. The Pullman back in the evening is even quicker. Some of the journeys requiring a change at Leeds can also be done in under three hours. This is much faster than by car.

Secondly, Bradford passengers should benefit from the electrification of the east coast main line, which will be completed to Leeds in 1989. I understand that with this electrification scheme, BR has no plans to withdraw through services to Bradford, as some had feared. These services will be provided with the very latest rolling stock. The locomotives will be changed at Leeds.

The east coast main line electrification scheme is a very good example of the commercial approach being taken by BR's inter-city sector, which is sponsoring the project. This project, at a value of over £300 million, is the largest for British Rail for over 25 years. BR was able to demonstrate that the scheme will be financially worth while, and we, therefore, were pleased to give it our warm approval.

As a result, additional benefits will flow to British industry in general and to Yorkshire in particular, about which the hon. Gentleman rightly spoke passionately. The Government recognise the potential advantages of electrification in the right circumstances, where the benefits justify the high costs of installation, and we are ready to approve projects where the financial basis is sound.

Our record is proof of our good will. Since we took office in 1979, and including the east coast main line scheme, we have approved electrification schemes involving about 630 route miles — about 1,580 track miles—at a cost of about £570 million at today's prices. But it must be for BR to determine its investment priorities and to bring forward proposals for Government approval. I understand that it considered the case for electrifying the line between Bradford and Leeds in 1982 but found that it could justify spending only some £2 million to £3 million against an estimated cost for the scheme of £10 million.

It has been suggested that appraisals of possible electrification schemes, such as that between Leeds and Bradfford, should not be determined solely on a commercial basis, and that was the thrust of the case made by the hon. Gentleman.

Our position, however, is firmly to believe that BR's inter-city sector, where the responsibility for a Leeds-Bradford electrification scheme would fall, should operate efficiently and invest efficiently. In making investment proposals for the inter-city sector, BR must demonstrate a commercial rate of return.

The Government are willing to authorise such proposals if they are commercially viable and sufficient funds are available to BR to meet its investment needs. It would be wrong to ask inter-city to make uncommercial investments. That would impose a continuing loss at a time when its competitors are free to meet their customers' requirements on a commercial basis.

Mr. Madden: Is there not a case for at least considering making funds for investment available to BR through the regional assistance programmes operated by the Department of Trade and Industry? Is that something that he would be at least willing to consider, in conjunction with his colleagues at the Department?

Mr. Spicer: I have made the Government's position clear on inter-city services. If there is time, I shall talk about the local services on which the hon. Gentleman may be focusing his attention.

I understand that the issue of seeking a European regional development fund grant has also been raised in connection with a Leeds to Bradford electrification scheme. I should say that once a project, approved by Government as necessary, is firmly established as part of BR's investment programme, it is for BR to decide whether to prepare and submit an application for a European regional development fund grant through the Government. The initiative here rests with BR.

I refer to local rail services affecting Bradford. Our objective for BR's local services generally is that they should provide modern, cost-effective transport at less cost to the taxpayer than at present. In pursuit of the objective of making savings to the taxpayer — the taxpayer currently supports BR to the tune of £900 million per year — the provincial services sector is cutting its requirement for central Government grant while still funding a massive programme of investment, replacing old rolling stock with new. That is the right way to achieve the modern, efficient railway that I am sure we all want, including the hon. Gentleman.

In the metropolitan counties, responsibilities for local rail service, rests with the passenger transport authorities. Abolishing the county councils has not changed that. Decisions on local railway services are still a local matter. That is as it should be. PTAs and their executives are in the best position to judge the value of local railway services within the overall provision of public transport in their area.

On the subject of local services, I am aware of the views that have been expressed about a potential service between Bradford and Sheffield. That matter has been raised in connection with British Rail's proposal to close some link lines in the Halifax and Huddersfield area. Under the statutory closure procedures, the transport users consultative committee for Yorkshire has submitted its report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is now being considered. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall take account of all the relevant factors, including any points that he has made in reaching a decision on BR's closure proposal.

In replying to the hon. Gentleman, I have tried to put the subject of Bradford's rail services into the wider context of the Government's policy towards the provision of railway services, both inter-city and local. I have explained the broad strategic objectives that we have set for the Railways Board, which act as a framework within which it runs the railway and decides on such matters as service levels, timetables, investment and fares.

The chairman of British Rail has accepted those objectives and is pursuing them with vigour. Like the Government, BR wants to provide good quality services at acceptable charges to its customers and at less cost to the taxpayer. It recognises that there is a long way to go but is trying hard to improve its services overall and its financial position.

I am sure that British Rail will pay close attention to what the hon. Member has said tonight in raising this issue. It is for British Rail to listen to what he said. The responsibility for management of the railways lies with British Rail, by statute.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Scotch Whisky

1. **Mr. John Townend** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the European Community's report on discrimination by the Japanese Government against imported Scotch whisky.

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): The Government welcome and are studying in detail the report published by the European Commission on exports to Japan of wines and liquor, including Scotch whisky. We are working in the Community towards a concerted strategy for resolving the difficulties still faced by those drinks in the Japanese market.

Mr. Townend: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that report confirms what many hon. Members on both sides of the House have been saying for some time—that the Japanese believe in free trade only for the Japanese? Is it not about time that we stopped pussyfooting around and said to the Japanese, "Remove discrimination against British products such as Scotch whisky and insurance within a specified time"—let us say six months. "If you do not, we shall take massive retaliatory action against your exports"? Have the Government not accepted the fact that it is no good talking politely to the Japanese, because they will merely bow and say, "Yes, in one or two years"? The only action they will appreciate is retaliatory action.

Mr. Channon: What my hon. Friend has said clearly strikes a chord in many parts of the House. We do not want to retaliate against Japanese exports to us. We want to get the Japanese to open up their market to us. That is what we should try to achieve, although we may not be able to. For once, my hon. Friend is slightly less than fair in what he says. A reduction in the tariff on Scotch whisky was included in the Japanese action programme in July. There has been some modest progress on that matter.

Mr. Wilson: Is the Minister aware that, due to the external ownership of the Scotch whisky industry, large quantities of malt have been exported to Japan for blending, thus preventing an opportunity for bottled Scotch to be sold there? Does he believe that it would now be appropriate to ask NEDO to undertake a sectoral inquiry into the future of the whisky industry, especially in view of the takeover bids which are currently in progress?

Mr. Channon: I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's suggestion on the latter point to the attention of my right hon. Friend, who is principally involved with the whisky industry, and I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says.

Sir Hector Monro: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that every restriction on the export of Scotch whisky has an impact on employment in Scotland, especially in the distilleries in the Highlands? Will he do everything that he can to try to resolve this matter as quickly as possible?

Mr. Channon: As my hon. Friend points out, the problem is not related only to Japan. We are trying to obtain better access for Scotch whisky in other markets in the world. We are having some success with some of them. I agree with my hon. Friend that it is extremely important that we should remove what barriers we can to the export of Scotch whisky, which is one of our most important exports. If we get a new round of trade talks going, our prime aim will be to bring down those barriers.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister talks about trying. Have we not already been trying?

Mr. Channon: We have been trying. This Government are not the only Government who have been trying. The European Commission has recently returned from a visit to Japan. It is about to formulate proposals which will go to the December Foreign Affairs Council. The House will no doubt be interested to hear the results.

Nationalised Industries (Share Flotations)

2. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment he has made of the ability of the financial markets to absorb a series of large flotations of shares in nationalised industries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): On the basis of the amounts that have been subscribed for attractive issues, I have no reason to doubt that the capacity of the financial markets will be sufficient.

Mr. Bruce: I am sure the Minister will not be surprised to hear that neither do I doubt that. Does he acknowlege that although his party's objective is wider share ownership, his friends in the City are positively salivating at the possibility of so many blue-chip shares coming to the market? Their energies and the billions of pounds that they control will be directed to blue-chip flotations instead of funding new enterprises which could create new jobs in new industries elsewhere.

Mr. Butcher: The other group of people that will be salivating are the population. The hon. Gentleman will be aware, for example, that arising from the British Telecom flotation, about 2 million subscribers were involved in what I thought was a Liberal principle of wider share ownership. I find the hon. Gentleman's attitude somewhat disconcerting.

Mr. Sackville: Does my hon. Friend agree that the surplus of institutional cash flow over Government sales of gilts and assets during the next financial year will average nearly £2 billion per quarter, so that any suggestion that privatisation will lead to a shortage of investment funds is utter nonsense?

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. The House may wish to know that in the 1985-86

financial year to date, net funds raised by new share issues totalled £6·5 billion, of which £4·6 billion was raised by the private sector and £1·9 billion by public sector issues.

Mr. Golding: Will it be possible to stop the fraud that took place at the time of the issue of BT shares? Will the Government take action against those who were fraudulently involved in making applications for shares in the BT flotation?

Mr. Butcher: That is a matter for the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide on the basis of his investigations. I assure the hon. Gentleman that if there are lessons to be learnt on other aspects of the share issue procedures, we shall fully note those and consider them in future flotations.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Does my hon. Friend recall that prior to the flotation of British Telecom the Jeremiahs in the House and elsewhere said that there was no way in which the City could absorb such a large flotation and that he would need at least three tranches? As they were wrong, does my hon. Friend accept that when we consider further privatisation we can rest assured that there will be no problem from the flotation point of view?

Mr. Butcher: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment. The BT flotation vindicated all of the Government's hopes, particularly on wider share ownership. Even though the bitter opposition of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) to that measure is obviously still persisting, I hope that he will join me in congratulating the 96 per cent. of BT employees who took advantage of the share issue.

Mr. John Smith: The Minister will be aware that the increase in the price of BT shares in one day showed clearly that the Government had sold them at well below their true value. Has not the privatisation timetable been forced by the need to create a large sum of money to be dispensed in electoral tax bribes in such a way that, once again, important British public assets will be sold at well below their true value, with greater pickings for the City, and to the ultimate public detriment?

Mr. Butcher: The right hon. and learned Gentleman, perhaps willfully, misunderstands the working of the market. A fine judgment must always be made about what the market will stand when fixing a price on flotation, and Opposition Members enjoy misinterpreting that process. The advantages of privatisation stand in their own right as a means of obtaining wider share ownership.

Gulf States

3. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to seek to increase trade with the Gulf states.

Mr. Channon: Trade with the Gulf states is about £3 billion annually. We are mounting a special programme, in conjunction with British trade associations and chambers of commerce, to increase awareness of export opportunities in Gulf markets, and I shall visit Kuwait, Oman and the Yemen Arab Republic next week.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Gulf states are one of our most important and succesful markets? Will he do all he can to support British business men who want to fight off competition from the Japanese, Italians and Germans?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend. The Gulf co-operation council area is now our third largest trading area after Europe and the United States. It is encouraging to note that Britain's exports to the Gulf are going up at a time when those of many other countries are going down.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the recent potential exports of Tornadoes to Saudi Arabia and Oman is an indication of the great increase in trade with the Gulf states and that, while we can always improve on it, that is the sort of example that we should be following?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that comment.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why cut the export trade mission budget to the British Overseas Trade Board? Surely that has an immediate effect on trade with the Gulf.

Mr. Channon: I do not think that that is right. The figure for the BOTB has been held broadly constant, and I hope that there will be no effect on trade — *[Interruption.]* As I said, the figure is broadly constant. There is a small reduction consistent with what I have said. There will be very little effect on the level of our export promotion efforts.

Developing World (Orders)

4. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps the Government are taking to assist British companies to win export orders from the developing world.

Mr. Channon: In addition to the help given already by my Department, by the commercial services of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and by the Overseas Development Administration, my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 12 November that the Government are introducing, under the aid and trade provision, a soft loan facility.

Mr. Maclean: I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's success in producing the soft loan facility, which will put British companies on a more equal footing with their foreign competitors.

Is it not the case that already our aid and trade provision has produced £1,600 million of orders for British companies? What additional impact does my right hon. Friend think the new facility will have?

Mr. Channon: The figure that my hon. Friend cited for the value of orders that the ATP has secured is broadly accurate. The new soft loan facility announced by my right hon. and learned Friend will increase the potential business that could be won with the ATP from about £250 million a year now to £500 million a year by 1988-89, so it is a substantial increase.

Mr. Eastham: May I emphasise the serious position in the heavy engineering industry, especially the turbine sector, which is trying to make inroads into developing countries, but which is being frustrated by the soft loan facilities introduced by France and other competitors? Is the Minister aware that that industry is losing magnificent opportunities in places such as China? What will he do about it?

Mr. Channon: I shall do exactly what I have already outlined. We have held discussions with the Chinese

authoritities about a soft loan facility, and that is now available in China. I believe that companies in the hon. Gentleman's constituency are already in touch with my Department on that matter.

Sir Anthony Grant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best service that the Government can render to both our exporters and the developing countries is to resist protectionism wherever it arises — whether in Japan, other countries or even this country?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend, which is why we have welcomed the GATT talks currently taking place in Geneva. I hope that they will lead to a proper round of talks next year.

Mr. Gould: While we welcome the extended scope of the aid and trade provision, does the Minister recognise how far short the measures announced in the Gracious Speech fall of what industry is requesting? Does not industry want a doubling of the money available under that scheme, with a roll-over provision so that what is not spent in one year can be spent in the following year, and a streamlining of the procedures by which decisions are taken? When will the Minister move on those important points?

Mr. Channon: I disagree utterly with the hon. Gentleman. Industry has welcomed my right hon. and learned Friend's announcement. We have already carried out streamlining and it is not presenting a problem at the present time. As I said a moment ago, the potential business that could be won with the new soft loan facility will double the effects of the ATP——

Mr. Gould: Industry wants a doubling of the money available.

Mr. Channon: What is the difference? The effect is exactly the same—business will be doubled. That is a very substantial step, but it is typical of the Opposition to be grudging and resentful.

British Book Printing

5. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has had concerning United States trade restrictions affecting British book printing.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Howard): We have had several approaches from hon. Members expressing concern about a discriminatory element of United States copyright law, the manufacturing clause, which is wholly unjustified.

Mr. Thompson: I thank my hon. and learned Friend for that encouraging reply. In view of the deep concern felt in Norwich and elsewhere about the rule-breaking by the United States, will he tell us what representations he is making to the United States authorities about that practice? What action does he propose to take if it appears likely that that damaging clause will be extended?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. and learned Friend visited Washington last month and reminded the United States Administration of our objections to the clause and our expectation that they would work towards its abolition. Earlier this month the European Community sent a formal letter to the United States Government reminding them of their breach of international obligations.

Mr. Adley: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that the British publishing industry is equally concerned about piracy, particularly on the part of Taiwan? Will he give an assurance that the Government are apprised of the situation?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the United States.

Privatisation

6. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what privatisation proposals are currently being considered by his Department.

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): My right hon. and learned Friend plans to return to the private sector as many as possible of the publicly owned enterprises for which he is responsible. They include the remaining warship building yards of British Shipbuilders, Rolls-Royce, British Steel Corporation, and BL.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Minister confirm newspaper reports that the Government intend that a substantial part of the next tranche of Cable and Wireless shares will go to institutional investors? How does that square with the desire to see wider share ownership among the general public?

Mr. Pattie: It would not be right for me to confirm newspaper reports at this stage. In due course the House will be informed of the arrangements for that disposal.

Mr. Couchman: Is my hon. Friend aware of the concern in my constituency about the future of English Estates, its funding, and its ability to redevelop Chatham dockyard? Will he decide whether to accept the management buy-out proposals as quickly as possible?

Mr. Pattie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that matter. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will be addressing himself to it later.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: Is the Minister aware that there is no commercial or industrial justification for the proposed privatisation of Rolls-Royce — [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] — because the company's viability is entirely dependent on Government contracts, Government aid for civil projects and the Government's purchasing power in relation to military projects? Given that total dependence, there should be public accountability, which can be achieved only while Rolls-Royce is in the public sector. Will the Minister therefore drop that item from his disgraceful shopping list?

Mr. Pattie: No, I will not. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will consider an analogy with British Aerospace, to which the same comments apply. Since 1980, when British Aerospace was once again privatised, its turnover has increased by 73 per cent. and its pre-tax profits have increased by 128 per cent. That is the reason for privatisation.

Economic Growth

7. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the average annual growth in the economy over the last six years.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Leon Brittan):

In the six years up to and including the first half of 1985, the annual average growth rate of gross domestic product was 1·25 per cent. Since the first half of 1981, the average growth rate has been 3 per cent.

Mr. Davies: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the annual average increase in output has been less than 1 per cent.? Grim as the national figures are, they actually hide unacceptable regional disparities. Will he confirm that the Welsh share of gross domestic product has fallen faster and to a lower level than that of any other region, with the exception of Northern Ireland, and is now 20 per cent. lower than the national average? Given that regional aid has been cut by £300 million this year, how does the right hon. and learned Gentleman expect regions of Britain to share in any growth that may come?

Mr. Brittan: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's general comments about the economy. They are belied by the fact that we are entering our fifth year of uninterrupted growth — *[Interruption]* — whether or not the hon. Gentleman regards that as a matter of amusement. The right test of regional policy is not simply the amount of money being spent. The changes that we have introduced to relate the amount being spent not just to capital investment, which might have taken place anyway, but to the production of jobs, represent a very sensible change of direction. So far, the results in terms of new jobs are encouraging.

Mr. Parris: If it is my right hon. and learned Friend's intention to help the regions in this way, what is the point in the Department giving £1 million in grants to English Sewing Limited to create 300 jobs in Scotland, while destroying 300 jobs in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) in Derbyshire?

Mr. Brittan: I shall come to that, but my hon. Friend will be aware that the policy is normally to give assistance only where there is a net increase in jobs. I am advised that his figures are not accurate and that the number of jobs that will be created is substantially larger. However, I will of course look into my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Does the Secretary of State agree that behind those figures lies the devastation of large sections of British manufacturing industry during the past six years? Will he persuade his colleagues that, instead of spending any resources that may be available at the time of the Budget on tax cuts, which will go into consumer expenditure, they should be put into soft loans, as has been done on the ATP scheme, to help British industry at home, and into more education and training, so that industry, particularly high technology industry, is not short of the skilled people it needs?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman does less than justice to the fact that output has entered its fifth year of growth and that manufacturing output is 11 per cent. above its 1981 level. The hon. Gentleman is right to identify particular areas of assistance, but the extent to which it can be given is a matter of judgment. I am sure that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will be interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's recommendations for the next Budget.

Mr. Maples: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the essential ingredients for achieving greater economic growth is improved competitiveness, so that we must examine carefully industrial costs under the Government's control? In that context, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions would help competitiveness?

Mr. Brittan: I am sure that my hon. Friend will also wish to take into account the fact that the national insurance surcharge has been removed. That was not an easy task, because of its size and the amount of revenue that it raised. My hon. Friend is right to stress the importance of improving competitiveness. Those concerned with reaching pay settlements should have that at the forefront of their minds if they wish to improve levels of employment, as we all do.

Mr. Williams: Has not the pathetic 1¼ per cent. growth in production been achieved entirely through increased North sea production, which was determined even before the Government came to office? Is not manufacturing production, in a year when the country is awash with energy, substantially lower than during the three-day week when electricity supplies were cut off? In view of that, what achievements do the Government have to boast about?

Mr. Brittan: The right hon. Gentleman is living in an unreal world. [HON. MEMBERS: "Nonsense."] Yes, he is, if he thinks that oil should be excluded and does not matter and that the achievement of oil is automatic. That achievement was possible only as a result of private enterprise taking the opportunity to benefit from the oil. The right hon. Gentleman ignores the Budget changes which have facilitated the exploitation of marginal fields which otherwise would not have taken place.

Manufacturing Industry

8. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he proposes to take to stabilise and improve the future of manufacturing industries in Lancashire.

Mr. Butcher: The best prospects for industrial growth in Lancashire lie in the Government's wider economic policies, which are creating conditions for a sustainable growth in jobs and output.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that for the people of Lancashire that answer means nowt? Have not Government policies shown consistently that the Government have no interest in the regions or in manufacturing industry? When will they do something about getting industries on the move again and about looking after the regions?

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman is comprehensively wrong about regional policy and about the role of manufacturing industry. Since November 1984, about £8 million has been deployed in regional aid assistance to Lancashire.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend accept that Lancaster city council, while making the best possible use of such grants as are available, believes that it is the duty of local people to attract industry? Is he aware that, in conjunction with the city council, moderate trade unions and the chambers of commerce, the area is attracting industry and has achieved the best job vacancy ratio in the county? Why do other councils not do likewise?

Mr. Butcher: Inward investors in particular look hard at the calibre, quality and motivation of local authorities and at the attitude in the local community to enterprise when they make their location decisions. The job creation programme, which is home grown and self-induced by local dynamism, does not, perhaps, receive enough attention.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Is it not a fact that the manufacturing sector in the north-west region, which includes Lancashire, has lost more than 300,000 jobs, and has continued to lose jobs every year since the Government took office in 1979? Last year it lost more than 10,000 jobs. Is it not also a fact that the north-west region relies heavily on manufacturing for its economic base, its employment base and for income support, and that it is being crucified by the Government's policies, which are indifferent to manufacturing industry and have done nothing to increase output, which has continued to diminish in real terms since 1979?

Mr. Butcher: I reject entirely the assertion that the Government are indifferent to the interests of the manufacturing sector. The phenomenon that the hon. Gentleman describes of a loss of the share of employment in manufacturing industry within various economies around the world is a common one, and the United Kingdom is not unique in that respect.

Research and Development

9. **Mr. Viggers** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied that sufficient priority is given to investment in research and development.

Mr. Pattie: No, I am not satisfied. In addition to a public sector expenditure of £4·2 billion last year, the Government have done a great deal to encourage a higher level of investment in industrial research and development.

Mr. Viggers: Does my hon. Friend agree that adequate expenditure on research and development is essential if we are to remain competitive internationally? Does he further agree that, despite the incentives given by the Government, many of our companies have been falling behind their competitors in the United States, Japan and elsewhere? May I suggest a modest proposal, which might help to focus investment attention on the sublect? It is that companies listed on the Stock Exchange should be required by law to include in their annual report and accounts an assessment of the amount they spend on research and development expenditure as a percentage of sales.

Mr. Pattie: I am interested in my hon. Friend's point. I should have thought that most companies would find it in their own interests to make such a declaration. Frankly, I am surprised that more do not. At this stage, I should not like such a disclosure to be made compulsory, but should prefer it to be encouraged as a form of best practice by bodies, such as the Confederation of British Industry. I understand that the accounting standards committee is reviewing practice at present, and in the light of its recommendations we shall consider what further action might be taken.

Dr. Bray: Why does the Minister not think it desirable to require companies to publish their research and development figures? Is he aware that Britain is almost the only country that does not offer tax credit or other tax advantages for expenditure on research and development?

Mr. Pattie: I have already explained to the House why I believe that it is not necessary to force companies to declare such figures. Because research and development have a direct impact on the bottom line, if the bottom line is less good than the company would wish it to be, it is in its interests to explain to its shareholders and the City in general the impact that research and development expenditure has had on it. Regarding fiscal incentives, I remind the hon. Gentleman that virtually all current research and development expenditure now qualifies for immediate 100 per cent. relief, as does capital expenditure on scientific research. The 100 per cent. initial allowance for scientific research is being retained, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: Does my hon. Friend accept that the midlands lost a motor cycle industry in the mistaken belief that we had perfected the motor cycle, and because of an unwillingness on the part of the management and unions to invest further in research and development?

Mr. Pattie: I take my hon. Friend's point. It is important for all sectors of British industry to consider new products and materials, particularly when their order books are full.

Mr. Ashdown: In assessing the priorities given to research, does the Minister agree that far too high a priority is given to defence-related research—more than 50 per cent. and much higher than any other OECD country? Is he aware, for example, that recently the Ministry of Defence has laid aside a further £5 million for basic computer research, provided it is matched by £5 million from the civilian research council? Does he recognise that that will further dry up research resources? Is he aware that the Pentagon is now trying to get its hands on Alvey flagship research for the SDI programme? Is he not worried about that, and what will he do about it?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that many of the fundamental technologies that are of relevance in the defence world are also relevant in the civil sector. He seems to want to have it both ways. He is extolling the Department of Defence in the United States, almost seeming to imply that we should follow that role model. I do not know whether his constituents, who are interested in the helicopter industry, would necessarily want to support a diminution of expenditure on research and development.

Mr. Hayes: Does my hon. Friend agree that unless we invest more in research and development and British microelectronics, we shall end up as a nation of assemblers of Japanese components?

Mr. Pattie: I agree, and it is important that we pay due attention to examples such as Japan, where 75 per cent. of research and development is done by industry itself.

Mr. John Smith: If the situation is as satisfactory as the Minister, in his complacent way, asserts, why is it that every week of this year the head of every research institution and the president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science complains so loudly about the Government's cuts in research and development budgets?

Mr. Pattie: As usual, the right hon. and learned Gentleman was not doing me the courtesy of listening to what I said. My first words in answering the original question were to the effect that I was not satisfied. I dare say that all research and development establishments and directors will always believe that they could use a larger budget. We have discussed with all these people what the correct priorities might be. We must at times be prepared to do something extremely difficult in research and development, which is to be ready to terminate some programmes which may appear to have run out of steam, and to put extra priority into other programmes with potential.

British Shipbuilders

10. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the present position regarding the proposed privatisation of British Shipbuilders' warship building yards.

Mr. Butcher: British Shipbuilders has already sold three of its warship building yards — Yarrow Shipbuilders Ltd., Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd. and Brooke Marine Ltd. Negotiations are continuing for the sale of the others — Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. and its subsidiary Cammell Laird Ltd., Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd., and Hall Russell Ltd.

Mr. Brown: The Minister will have seen the reply given yesterday by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement about the ordering programme for the type 23 frigates, and he will know with what dismay his answer was greeted on Tyneside. Will the Minister confirm that the Government's failure to honour their earlier commitments to Tyneside about the replacement of type 23 frigates at Swan Hunters has set back privatisation for that yard and, further, that the subsequent redundancy notices are being delayed until after the Tyne Bridge by-election?

Mr. Butcher: The recent industrial relations in that yard will not have helped the hon. Gentleman in championing the cause of his constituents, which I know he is anxious to do. The order programme is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who will no doubt note carefully what the hon. Gentleman has said this afternoon.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Minister admit that any further delay in ordering the type 23 frigates not only puts his privatisation timetable in jeopardy, but puts at risk hundreds of jobs at Swan Hunter and in the north generally, which has already lost 219,000 jobs in the past six years? Will he come clean and answer the point put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) — that his failure to tell us about the jobs at risk at Swan Hunter in the north-east has less to do with concern about the future of the shipbuilding industry and more to do with his concern about the fate of the Conservative candidate in the forthcoming by-election?

Mr. Butcher: I have no doubt that the candidate in the by-election is more than able to look after himself — *[Interruption]*—sorry, herself—and that she will be able to meet that point. I repeat that this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister, and will also be observed by the lady who is standing in the by-election.

Industry (Capital Investment)

11. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the latest figures for capital investment in industry; and how these compare with the figures for the past two years.

Mr. Brittan: Total capital investment in United Kingdom industry in 1984 reached more than £26·8 billion, the highest level on record and 10 per cent. above the 1983 level of £24·4 billion. In the first half of 1985, total industrial investment was 6 per cent. above that in the corresponding period in 1984.

Mr. Carlisle: Those are encouraging figures for the economy, but does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that in the end both investment and jobs depend on the profits made by industry, so it is important that the profitability of British industry is at its highest since 1973 and that prospects for the coming year are good?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. No industry will invest if it cannot afford to do so—hence the importance of profitability. Even with profits, however, no industry will invest unless its prospects appear to it to be good. Therefore, the high figure for investment that I have given shows not only ability to invest but confidence in the future on the part of British industry.

Mr. Litherland: Will the Secretary of State come to the real world and to my constituency in the north-east of Manchester to see what was once a vibrant manufacturing industrial base now in complete isolation, with empty factories standing like tombstones of a once proud past? Does he appreciate that that is what Prince Charles was talking about when he said that we were becoming a fourth-rate nation? Prince Charles and the voters of this country should realise that we are becoming a fourth-rate nation because we have a fourth-rate Government. People cannot live on fraudulent claims and promises. When are we to have real investment?

Mr. Brittan: The hon. Gentleman does less than justice to his constituents by ignoring the fact that assisted area status has been given to Manchester and the figures show that that is being used on a very substantial scale. To talk about investment in the real world while ignoring figures showing the highest level of investment on record does not do justice to the hon. Gentleman's constituents. The confidence of British industry will be best served in the interests of the hon. Gentleman's constituents and their employment if he accepts the improving situation instead of trying to ignore it for political reasons.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I welcome the increased investment and congratulate the Government on achieving it, but does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the figure is still totally inadequate? Does he further agree that industry will invest and plan for the future only if it believes that the Government are entirely behind it in seeking to create additional jobs, and that that will be achieved only if the Government protect British industry from unfair competition? With regard to the clothing and textile industries, will my right hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that the Government will take a more robust attitude in defence of British industry in the current multi-fibre arrangement negotiations?

Mr. Brittan: The answer to my hon. Friend's question is given in the fact that manufacturing investment rose by 14·5 per cent. in the past year. That shows confidence on the part of British industry in the policies being followed by the Government. As for the multi-fibre arrangement, the Government are committed to negotiating a further arrangement on the terms stated by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade.

Mr. Williams: The Secretary of State has cited manufacturing industry as an example of the Government's success. Is he aware that the level of manufacturing investment to which he referred is not merely 21 per cent. below the level in 1979, but lower than the levels for 1978, 1977, 1976, 1975 and 1974, and £1 billion lower, than in 1970, when the then Labour Government went out of office, and also lower than 1969? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that he has to go back to 1968 to find a comparably low figure under a Labour Government? Is he proud of those 17 wasted years?

Mr. Brittan: I am proud of the fact that capital investment in United Kingdom industry reached more than £26·8 billion in 1984—the highest level on record. I have given figures showing the improvement for manufacturing industry. The right hon. Gentleman is not doing himself, his party or the country any good by concentrating exclusively on manufacturing industry, at the expense of capital investment.

European Steel Council

12. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the outcome of the European Steel Council in Luxembourg on 29 and 30 October.

Mr. Brittan: I was extremely pleased by the outcome of the Steel Council on 29 October. Industry Ministers agreed a tough new code on state aids to the steel industry, which should protect all United Kingdom steel firms against the risk of subsidies to their continental competitors. The first steps were also taken towards a return to a free market in steel, with the ending of quotas on coated sheet and reinforcing bar.

In addition, my hon. Friend the Minister of State negotiated an improvement in BSC's quota of 360,000 tonnes. The corporation has had to resort to expensive and uncertain quota purchases over the last two years to maintain its share of the United Kingdom market at a time when the United Kingdom economy was expanding faster than continental economies. This quota increase should consolidate BSC's position after the acquisition of Alphasteel, without the need for more ad hoc deals.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that BSC is now one of the most cost-effective steel producers in Europe, and compares well with Japan and the United States? Does not this welcome increase in quota achieved by my hon. Friend the Minister of State represent an opportunity for BSC to achieve increased viability, which is the only means of securing job security and its long-term future?

Mr. Brittan: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The private and public steel industries' achievements have been substantial and are worthy of my hon. Friend's commendation.

Mr. Crowther: What further closures are intended in the engineering steels sector, since the Govenment are to put money into the new private sector company that will take over next April, and since the Council of Ministers has decided that no state aid will be permissible after January unless associated with capacity reductions? Can the House feel confident that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows more about the steel industry than does the Minister of State, who, four weeks ago, assured me and my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) that rumours of further cuts were complete conjecture, at the very moment when BSC was announcing them in Rotherham?

Mr. Brittan: I assure the hon. Gentleman that our agreement to the completions package does not have any implications for closures such as he has in mind.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Secretary of State accept BSC's prediction in its corporate plan that there will be no increase in demand for steel in the 1990s because of the further decline of British manufacturing industry?

Mr. Brittan: I do not accept the question in the terms that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has employed. BSC has to make its plans. It is entitled to do so. The basis of the Government's decisions in regard to steel were announced in August and have not changed since then.

Industrial Competitiveness

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the implications for the competitiveness of British industry of the change in average unit labour costs between 1982 and the third quarter of 1985.

Mr. Pattie: Internationally comparable figures on unit labour costs in manufacturing are available only for the second quarter of 1985. These show that since 1982 unit labour costs in domestic currency rose by nearly 9 per cent. in the United Kingdom, remained broadly constant in the United States and actually fell in Germany and Japan, and reinforce the need for pay moderation if we are to remain competitive.

Mr. Penhaligon: Does the Minister not agree that the Chancellor's enthusiasm for high interest and exchange rates can, at best, keep the situation as it is, but is far more likely to make it a great deal worse in the near future? Does he agree that that means that the relative decline of our manufacturing sector must continue?

Mr. Pattie: No, that does not follow at all. It is essential that interest rates are set to maintain the monetary conditions necessary to keep downward pressure on inflation. Unless wage increases are limited and linked to output, today's pay rises will be tomorrow's job losses.

Mr. Stokes: Now that inflation is falling steadily and will probably, in due course, go below 4 per cent., is there any justification for the annual round of pay increases that are not linked to productivity?

Mr. Pattie: My hon. Friend is bringing the House back to the statement made during the CBI annual conference at Harrogate, the essence of which was that there should be no wage increases unless they are linked to output.

Mr. Gould: Is there not a direct causal connection between the sharp loss of competitiveness that is shown in

all the indices and the sudden and unwelcome appearance of a deficit in our trade in manufactures? Why have the Government's policies produced this unfortunate concurrence?

Mr. Pattie: I reject totally the hon. Gentleman's assertion that the deficit has been caused by the Government's policies. He conveniently ignores the fact that the trough of 1981 was directly attributable to the overmanning and low productivity that developed under the Labour Government.

Japan

15. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current annual deficit on visible trade with Japan.

Mr. Channon: In the period from November 1984 to October 1985 the United Kingdom had a visible trade deficit of £3,054 million with Japan.

Mr. Chapman: In view of the appallingly high and worsening deficit, is it not time that the British Government urgently convened a conference of all the countries in a similar position to plan concerted action against Japan, which would include specific targets for the reduction of the deficit? Does my right hon. Friend recognise that there is a great difference between free trade and so-called free trade conducted on unfair terms, which is the most evil form of protectionism?

Mr. Channon: I note my hon. Friend's remarks, and we discussed the matter on an earlier question. I am not sure whether a conference of the countries affected would be appropriate. We must await the Commission's proposals in the light of the visit to Japan. To be fair, in July the Japanese announced an action programme. They should now quantify what they expect to achieve from their import programme.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best method of reducing the trade deficit would be to persuade more British people to buy British goods? Is he aware of the action of the "Think British" campaign, and what will he do to support that campaign?

Mr. Channon: I strongly believe that people should buy British when British goods are competitive and are the best quality, as they so frequently are. I hope that people will note my hon. Friend's important point.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware that we are doing precisely what the Japanese want us to do—playing the waiting game and taking no action? Why does the Minister not wake up and recognise that all the Western economies must take some concerted action to deal with the problem? The Japanese must be taught a lesson. They must play the game by the rules followed by all other major manufacturing nations. Why does the Minister not do something as he sits in his office?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is a little unfair. The EC has just sent a mission to Japan——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Another talking shop.

Mr. Channon: The United Kingdom's trading policy must be directed through the EC, because it is a member of the Community. The Commission has just sent a mission to Japan, and a report will be published during the next few weeks. We shall discuss the matter in December and make any decisions thereafter.

Thailand

16. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his Department's policy on financial support for export contracts to Thailand.

Mr. Channon: My Department and others have a range of means of assisting United Kingdom companies exporting to Thailand. We shall continue to deploy financial assistance as effectively as possible in support of such exporters.

Mr. Atkins: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the gratitude of my constituents who work for Leyland Bus for the efforts that he made on their behalf in relation to the deal to sell buses to the Bangkok mass transit system? In view of the recent lay-offs at Leyland Bus, will my right hon. Friend continue to press the case for that company, especially since it beat world-wide competition to achieve success in that tender? Any further financial support that he can give will be greatly appreciated.

Mr. Channon: We shall do what we can to help Leyland Bus. We have already offered substantial aid of some £20 million in support of Leyland's bid under the aid and trade Community budget. I have had several discussions with Thai Ministers about the project, and I was pleased that the Thai Foreign Minister recently replied to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary saying that he was confident that his colleagues on the Thai Council of Ministers would continue to give the Leyland consortium every opportunity to present its ideas. That is a good bid, and I hope that some proposal will be successful.

English Estates

17. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the future role of English Estates.

Mr. Brittan: English Estates will continue to play a vital role in implementing our policies. In particular, the advance factory programme is one of the most effective and responsive instruments of regional policy, to which I attach the greatest importance. English Estates provides the Government with the best available means of carrying out that programme

Mr. Heddle: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his reply. Does he agree that there is concern that if the much-heralded management buy-out were to proceed without strings attached, and without pre-conditions, there would not be enough factory space available in the assisted areas to take up the unprecedented demand that apparently exists for much-needed factory space in those areas? Will my right hon. and learned Friend explore further the possibility of covenant guarantees to ensure that if there were a management buy-out, firms could at least still set up in the assisted areas?

Mr. Brittan: Covenant guarantees have their own problems, but I can assure my hon. Friend that I would not agree to a management buy-out that had the effect that he fears. I would agree to it only if it led to a more responsive

and effective advance factory programme of the kind that we want. The objective is clear, and I am not yet satisfied with the proposals put forward.

Mr. Ashdown: Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to place on record the fact that the Government will ensure that sufficient funds are made available for English Estates to carry out the full development plan for the Chatham dockyard area?

Mr. Brittan: I have already answered questions on the Chatham project that English Estates is undertaking, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I understand his concern.

Mr. Fallon: Is it not standing regional policy on its head to cut back industrial development by English Estates in the counties of Cleveland and Durham, while encouraging English Estates to fund the development of the dockyard in the south-east?

Mr. Brittan: The Chatham aspect was agreed in particular circumstances, but I agree with my hon. Friend that the main thrust of regional policy has to be in the regions. It is in that context that I am looking at the proposals that have been put forward. It is worth pointing out that the new policy, which reaches its anniversary tomorrow, has shown that to mid-October in the west midlands, for example, £17 million of aid has been approved for projects creating or safeguarding nearly 12,000 jobs. That is just one example. I am giving the House and hon. Members further details.

Mr. Madden: Will the Secretary of State tell his Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the other place that I am delighted to know that he is visiting the Lister high technology park in my constituency, which was built by English Estates? Will he urge his ministerial colleague to travel to Bradford by train, rather than fly, as he proposes, so that he can see for himself the deplorable rail services which my constituents have to endure every day—a matter which I raised on the Adjournment last night—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not relevant to the question.

Mr. John Smith: If the Secretary of State links expenditure on regional aid to the creation of jobs, does it not automatically follow that a reduction of two thirds in overall expenditure on regional aid since the Government came into office is a major cause of unemployment in the regions?

Mr. Brittan: No, it points to nothing of the sort, because the regional policy in its previous form was not well directed to producing jobs. It was a policy which provided vast sums of money to firms engaged in capital investment, but did not lead to a substantial number of new jobs. The new policy is firmly targeted at new jobs, and the prospects look extremely good. For example, so far regional selective assistance offers of £222 million have been made, and under the new scheme regional development grants of £82 million have been made in the limited time since then. That is far better targeted than the old policy.

Northern Region

18. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the reduction in real terms in regional assistance to industry in the northern region since 1978-79.

Mr. Butcher: There was a reduction of 57 per cent. in real terms in regional assistance to industry in the northern region between 1978-79 and 1984-85. One of the reasons for that is that we are directing our assistance more cost-effectively.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Is it not a scandal that the Minister is able to give a figure of that scale to the House in view of the steady, scandalous climb in unemployment in the northern region since the Government came to office? Is not his Government's lack of care for the region illustrated, not only by his and his colleagues' ignorance of what is going on in the region, but by his ignorance of his own party's candidate in the Tyne Bridge by-election?

Mr. Butcher: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that, at almost 97 per cent., the north-east remains the region with the highest assisted area coverage. He should also be aware that, under section 7, assistance is demand-led, and the support going into the region under that section depends on the quality and number of applications coming forward.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you advise me on a matter that arises directly out of question No. 10? I asked the Minister about the privatisation of Swan Hunter shipyard in my constituency and he said that that was a matter for the Ministry of Defence. The Table Office will not accept that. Can you advise me to which Department I should address my questions in future and which Minister is responsible?

Mr. Speaker: The first matter is for the Minister——

Mr. Brown: No.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall look into the second matter.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State was replying to question No. 10 asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), he referred to the Conservative candidate in Tyne Bridge constituency in the male tense——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Brown: The reference to the female candidate in the male tense is not correct. I do not say that the Chair is responsible, but I should like to refer to the official record, which is your responsibility, Mr. Speaker. I am not aware that the person standing as a Conservative candidate in the Tyne Bridge constituency is masquerading——

Mr. Speaker: Order. All this sounds like an Adjournment debate. It is not a matter for me at all. What is the point of order for me—and succinctly, please?

Mr. Brown: I was coming to the point of order, which you must rule on as custodian of the *Official Report*. I am concerned because, as you know, from time to time Official Reporters have to alter or correct incorrect statements made by right hon. and hon. Members so that

the report is factual. Will you give a ruling — here comes the point of order — that the reference to the Conservative candidate in Tyne Bridge constituency as a male be deleted from the official record and a reference to the candidate as a female be inserted? Alternatively, will you rule that the Leader of the House should come to the Dispatch Box and make a statement to verify the gender of the person who is standing as a female?

Mr. Speaker: I think that I have got the drift of the hon. Gentleman's argument. We need not have the official record corrected. The hon. Gentleman has done that.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I say that, whether she is male or female, she is very good anyway?

Pensioners (Hypothermia)

3.34 pm

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the alarming increase in the number of pensioners dying from cold—415 in the first six months of this year compared with 329 in the whole of 1984—and the Government's failure to ensure that new guidelines for exceptionally severe weather payments are issued."

That failure could mean that needy pensioners will be refused payments by the staff of the Department of Health and Social Security. Hon. Members will know that the scheme in operation last winter had to be abandoned because it was quite unworkable. Indeed, since then it has been declared invalid by the social security commissioner. The Government should ensure that new guidelines are issued at once. The weather is getting colder and more pensioners are at risk of hypothermia. Further deaths can be avoided if the Government act.

Yet the Government's complacency is shown not only by the Prime Minister's disgraceful response at the Dispatch Box yesterday to the hypothermia figures which have just been issued, but by the Government's failure to change the system for exceptionally severe weather payments which was promised as far back as last April. Nothing has been done. Pensioners could die if the Government fail to act.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which she believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the alarming increase in the number of deaths from hypothermia and the Government's failure to bring forward new regulations for payment for heating in exceptional weather conditions."

I have listened with care to what the hon. Lady has said, but I regret that I do not consider that the matter that she has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit her application to the House.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 13 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Roger King
Mr. Ivor Stanbrook
Mr. Tony Lloyd

Orders of the Day

Anglo-Irish Agreement

[Second Day]

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[26 November]:

That this House approves the Anglo-Irish Agreement (Cmnd. 9657) signed on 15th November by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald.—*[The Prime Minister.]*

Question again proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State, may I draw the attention of the House to the fact that I have a long list of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in the second day of this important debate? We had a number of very long speeches yesterday. I hope that it will be possible to call more hon. Members today.

3.38 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): As we embark on the second day of the debate, the House will have been struck by the different views on the agreement that are held in different quarters which were expressed on the first day. It is fair to say that it has been generally welcomed in Great Britain and also by the minority community in Northern Ireland. That welcome has been echoed more widely in the United States, among our partners in the EC and in the Commonwealth. It is seen by the majority, I believe, as a constructive if limited change to try to alleviate the age-old problems of polarisation and to contribute to reconciliation in Northern Ireland, thus making a real advance in the fight against terrorism. But against that favourable view, broadly reflected in this House, we have seen the strong, indeed passionate, opposition of the Unionist representatives in this House. While I have to say that I think that they have seriously exaggerated the effect and scale of this agreement, I accept that there are serious worries and fears among their constituents. It is precisely those that I wish to address.

First, however, I should like to say something on one criticism that I understand. Negotiations between sovereign Governments need confidentiality. In consequence, we were not able to take people in Northern Ireland into full consultation before the agreement was reached in the way that we would normally wish. That was simply not possible in such negotiations, and I fully understand and sympathise with the frustration that this caused. It has undoubtedly caused resentment and that has not helped the consideration of the agreement itself, an agreement that I believe can offer real benefits to unionist as well as nationalist communities.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make a little progress with my speech.

A number of fears have been raised about this agreement and I said that I should like to address them. The first fear is that this agreement is the beginning of some slippery slope to a united Ireland. In fact, the truth is precisely the opposite. In the first article of the agreement the Irish Government join us in affirming, in what we hope will be a binding international agreement,

[Mr. King]

if the House approves it, that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would come about only with the consent of a majority of the people in the Province. What is more, they have also recognised that the present wish of the majority in Northern Ireland is for no change in its British status.

The British Government have always made it clear that the status of Northern Ireland would not be changed without the consent of a majority in the Province.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. King: I will in a moment. The unionists have often pointed out, however, with justice, that there is no binding international commitment to their rights on the part of the Republic. In this agreement the Republic accepts that commitment as well. As Dr. FitzGerald, the Taoiseach, said:

"It is a commitment that this state will not be a party to any attempt to constrain the people of Northern Ireland, against the will of a majority for any change in the status of Northern Ireland."

Mr. Marlow: The Government's commitment that Northern Ireland will not become part of the Irish Republic unless a majority of the people wish it is well known and has been stated for a long time. What, however, is the Government's view? Do they wish Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom? Do they care whether Northern Ireland remains a part of the United Kingdom? Do not the Government mind at all? What is their view? Surely the Government care for their citizens.

Mr. King: Of course. That is why we insisted on article 1, which commits the Republic of Ireland to this position. The Government's view is precisely that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and that the rights of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland must be respected. We fully support and endorse that. On behalf of the Government, I want to make that absolutely clear. May I also make it absolutely clear that the Government wish Northern Ireland to be a part of the United Kingdom.

Rev. Ian Paisley *rose*——

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): If the British Government want Northern Ireland to be a part of the United Kingdom, why have they committed themselves in article 1(c) to taking Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom?

Mr. King: The legitimacy of the unionist position, which we fully support, rests upon a democratic, majority vote. That is enshrined in legislation. Consequently, we fully support the view that Northern Ireland should be part of the United Kingdom. If, however, the majority view were to change, the House would have to recognise that fact.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. King: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman as he was the first Member to wish to intervene.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The first point that the right hon. Gentleman made was important for the people of Northern Ireland. Does he think that it was right and proper for the Dublin Government to confer with the SDLP whose spokesman said on television that his party leader and party members were informed at every stage about how the negotiations were going? Will he condemn that action by the Dublin Government?

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot answer for another Government. These negotiations were conducted by us confidentially. That is the only way that they could be conducted. I cannot comment on the other part of the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington) *rose*——

Mr. King: I have already given way a number of times.

Mr. Stanbrook: Will my right hon. Friend give way to one of his own Back Benchers?

Mr. King: The fear of a united Ireland has bedevilled life in the Province for far too long. Everyone knows in his heart that it could never happen without consent. Dr. FitzGerald said in the Dail:

"I believe that no sane person would wish to attempt to change the status of Northern Ireland without the consent of a majority of its people."

That is the reality. It is recognised in the agreement. Unionists now have that reality recognised. I believe that the agreement provides the bulwark that they have always sought.

I hope that that message will be understood by unionists in Northern Ireland. It puts into perspective the other parts of the agreement. In particular, it puts into perspective the new Intergovernmental Conference about which so many misleading stories have been told.

The thinking behind the conference is simple and clear. The facts, as the House knows, on Northern Ireland are that there is a substantial majority which is and sees itself as British and which has every intention of remaining British and of being part of the United Kingdom. We must recognise that there is a minority which believes itself to be Irish and which does not identify with the United Kingdom. That is the reality. We may regret it, but we know that that is the position. Our aim has always been to build greater trust and co-operation between the communities. It is now vital to find a way of reconciling the minority to the institutions and administration of the Province. That is the key role of the conference.

Some people reacted to the announcement of the Intergovernmental Conference as though the Republic of Ireland never made any representations about matters in Northern Ireland. Everyone is familiar with the fact that it has been its regular practice to make representations on a full range of matters. There is no secret about that. The effect of the conference is to formalise that and to use it to strengthen and improve the government of Northern Ireland by giving our consultations a wider dimension. At the same time, we hope to use it to improve co-operation between our two Governments on matters of mutual interest, most notably security. That is all.

I wish to make the following points clear. There is no secret agenda or hidden purpose. The conference will not be an executive body. It will be serviced by a small secretariat. Rumours have been spread about that the secretariat would be a large independent body and would become some kind of complaints commission. None of that is correct. It will be a small secretariat which exists only to service the conference and to prepare agendas and papers.

The conference will have no decision-making powers. Those will remain firmly where they are now—with British Ministers responsible to Parliament—and, as article 2 of the agreement explicitly states, there will be no derogation of sovreignty in either country. We believe that the conference will be a limited though, we hope, effective device to help us improve our administration of Northern Ireland in the interests of all its people.

There have been complaints. One complaint about the original announcement in the agreement is that the agreement deals only with ways for the minority to express its views and makes no mention of the majority. The majority, because it is a majority, already has channels established for putting forward its views. Indeed, as I look around, I see that 15 of the 17 Members of this House are able to use those channels. They are also a majority in the Northern Ireland Assembly and in most of the councils in the Province.

Nothing in the agreement will hinder or supplant these bodies. We shall continue to listen closely and attentively to them, to take their views into account and to try, wherever possible, to accommodate them. The purpose of the conference is to assure the minority that its views will be heard more effectively. But in no sense is it intended to stifle or supersede the views of the majority, which obviously must be respected.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I support what my right hon. Friend and the Prime Minister are seeking to do and wish them to succeed. Can my right hon. Friend say that no attempt will be made politically by the conference to lean on the Royal Ulster Constabulary in respect of its administration of the law? He will know that in southern Ireland the Commissioner of Police is subject to a political instruction. That is not the case in Northern Ireland.

Mr. King: Yes, I am happy to give that assurance, and my hon. Friend will know that that is clearly stated in the agreement. Also, there are no operational responsibilities in security.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow) *rose*——

Mr. King: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will permit me to make progress.

I want to deal with the fear that the conference proceedings will be secret or will be hidden from the unionists. That is unfounded as well. The Government fully recognise the need for the people of the Province to be informed about meetings of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference. Moreover, the Government recognise the need to devise means to keep the House informed of proceedings, and we shall welcome discussions through the usual channels on how that can best be achieved.

Nor do we believe that the agreement will in any sense hinder devolution. Indeed, the Irish Government have specifically committed themselves in the agreement to support that policy, and any matters that have devolved will automatically pass out of the scrutiny of the conference.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down) *rose*——

Mr. King: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman shortly.

I also note the comment made yesterday in the House by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume):

> "The agreement means that I am prepared to sit down now and determine how we shall administer the affairs of Northern Ireland in a manner that is acceptable to both traditions."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 786.]

I say directly to the hon. Gentleman that there is now a clear responsibility on him and his colleagues to do all they can to honour that pledge. Likewise, I hope that the unionists will recognise that the agreement can offer real prospects for devolution.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: The Secretary of State said that the Government would consider methods of keeping this House and others informed of the work of the conference. How does he reconcile that with the statement in the communiqué:

> "The two Governments envisage that the meetings and agenda of the Conference will not normally be announced"?

If the meetings and the agenda are not made known, what can be?

Mr. King: It will be the proceedings and the matters that have been discussed. It is a question whether announcements are made after the conference is held. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the communiqué sets out the agenda for the first meeting, although that would not normally be announced. It does not deal with the proceedings after that. I hope that the whole House will agree that it is important that there should be as much disclosure as possible, as secrecy would be extremely damaging and would be exploited by those who did not want progress and reconciliation. I hope that the House welcomes my announcement.

It is the Government's objective that the agreement will, in time, help to isolate the men of violence. In the meantime, it will certainly help us to pursue more vigorously the attack against terrorism. Article 9 is most important in that respect because it is devoted to ways in which cross-border security can be improved and to ways of improving intelligence, training and co-operation between the two police forces. Indeed, I understand that the Chief Constable of the RUC and the Commissioner of the Garda are making arrangements to meet in the near future. We are determined to improve and enhance in every way possible cross-border co-operation to defeat terrorism.

The Irish Government have announced their intention to accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism, which will make it much easier to extradite terrorist suspects from the South. They have also undertaken to help us to devise a programme to improve relations between the nationalist community and the security forces.

Many people refuse to believe that the Republic really will work more closely with us on security. Anyone who recalls the recent prison escape attempt in the South and the names of some of those detained in that prison will recognise that as a clear reminder of the threat that the IRA represents to the Government of the South as much as to our Government. I do not think that any hon. Member, on either side of the House, need doubt our real determination to defeat the IRA and the men of violence. But nor do I doubt the Irish Government's good faith in that matter. I believe that increased co-operation with them will yield to both sides real benefits in security.

Mr. Stanbrook: My right hon. Friend referred to the possibility of the Irish Government acceding to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism for

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the purpose of extradition. However, previously the Republic has claimed that it is impossible to do that because its constitution prevents it from making any such arrangement. Have the Government suddenly overcome their legal scruples, or is the Republic really bound by the agreement, even though it is only between two Governments?

Mr. King: I am not familiar with the point raised by my hon. Friend. I have accepted in good faith the Irish Government's important statement, and I hope that my hon. Friend will not seek to undermine it. I am sure that the whole House realises the benefit that it will bring.

I am amazed by hon. Members who appear determined to decry every element in the agreement. There would be more credibility in the opposition of some hon. Members if they accompanied their criticisms and genuine fears—which this House respects—with a recognition of the achievements represented in the agreement. I find it very depressing to listen to some hon. Members. I started my remarks by accepting that there are real fears. My goodness, I know that as well as any hon. Member. There are genuine concerns about the agreement among many decent moderate unionists in Northern Ireland. I quite accept that. But I am entitled to expect real achievements and improvements to be accepted in the right spirit.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. King: I do not——

Mr. Winterton: My right hon. Friend has not answered the question.

Mr. King: I do not underestimate the fears and worries with which many in the unionist community have received this agreement, but I have tried to show that those fears are seriously exaggerated and misplaced. This agreement offers the prospect of better security and of a return to greater stability and prosperity for them and their children. At the same time, I firmly believe that it buttresses, rather than undermines, their constitutional position.

It is, therefore, with great regret that I hear pledges by Unionist Members in the House, and other unionists, to withdraw co-operation from the Government. I regret the loss of their co-operation, and I regret that I will not have the benefit, I understand, of their views and advice on all the many wide-ranging problems involving Northern Ireland. But, of course, I accept that that is their right, and I respect, as I hope the House does, their decision to opt for the constitutional path of opposition.

I hope that in the coming months all people in the Province will spurn violence or unconstitutional methods, and that, if this agreement is approved tonight by Parliament, that decision will be respected. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, and it is right that this matter should be determined by the Parliament of the United Kingom.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. King: If the House decides tonight to endorse the agreement, the Government will, of course, implement its decision. When we do so, we will listen carefully to what all parties in the Province tell us: to what the Assembly tells us, to what local councillors tell us, to what the constitutional nationalists tell us, and now to what the Intergovernmental Conference tells us. We will endeavour to act, in the light of their advice, in a constructive way that will benefit all the people of Northern Ireland.

Of course, no single agreement can solve all the problems of Northern Ireland, but our hope is that this agreement will provide a basis on which to build a better future for the Province—a basis on which we can build greater co-operation and trust between the two communities, and between the United Kingdom and the Republic as well.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) said yesterday, we cannot go on as we are. We must break out of the stalemate of increasing polarisation and the sickening background of terrorism. Those who say no——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: We have heard it all before.

Mr. King: Those who will allow no change are saying that the Province can never break out of its cycle of division and despair.

We must give hope, and I believe that tonight the House can give that hope. To those who have made clear their fears, I say, "Give this agreement a chance. Do not prejudge it before you have seen how it works in practice. Because if it can be made to work, all the people of Northern Ireland will be the gainers, and only the terrorists will lose."

That is the ultimate aim of this agreement—an end to terrorism and a return to normality. It is something that the overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland crave for, and something that all of us should work for on their behalf.

I commend the agreement to the House.

4.4 pm

Mr. Peter Archer (Warley, West): Whatever else has been achieved by the events of the last fortnight, it is refreshing and encouraging to see a debate on Northern Ireland so well attended, and to see events in Northern Ireland so widely discussed on this side of the water. It is true that a consensus among the people of Northern Ireland can be achieved only in Northern Ireland and that reconciliation can take place only between those who are divided. But in the past, part of the problem has been the feeling that no one outside Northern Ireland cared about what happened there, that tragic divisions were seen, outside Northern Ireland, simply as a problem of security and that policy consisted of a reaction to successive crises.

I was a little troubled, because I thought that the Secretary of State twice gave the impression that the agreement was simply a reaction to violence. I hope that that was unintentional, and I see from his expression that it was. But now the people of Britain are paying attention. There is an opportunity for the respective groupings to explain their case. Whatever other divisions we may have, I believe that all the people of Britain begin from one common premise. During the past fortnight, people who are not politicians and whose conversations with me are usually on different topics have come to see me and have expressed a concern for Northern Ireland. They may not understand the details of Irish politics, they may not be familiar with the events of Irish history, which the children of Northern Ireland learn at their mother's knee, and they may not understand the conflicting aspirations, but they all know that the people of Northern Ireland have suffered too

much. They want to see them enjoy peace, and security and prosperity. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) said yesterday, they do not see Northern Ireland as a normal part of the United Kingdom. But that does not mean that they are indifferent.

So when the respective spokesmen state their cases, the people of Britain are listening. We have been repeatedly told of the unionist people's determination to have no part in these proposals. I do not doubt the strength of their feeling about that. If I had not grasped the strength of that feeling before last week, it certainly became apparent when my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and I visited Northern Ireland and talked to people about it.

I readily confess that the calm exposition and the logical analysis that are part of the function of the House scarcely belong in the same world as that of the bewildered and anguished people we met over there. But we also met many unionists who were troubled that they had had a bad press on this side of the water. They were aware that they had lost sympathy among the people of Great Britain, and they knew why.

First, those people knew that they had not been well served by the immoderate language employed by some of their spokesmen. I do not include in that the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), who spoke with such passion in yesterday's debate. He is not the most vitriolic and uncompromising of Unionist representatives — *[Interruption.]* That was intended as a compliment. But I sense that the hon. Gentleman's contribution to this debate did not persuade the House. No one would doubt his sincerity or the clarity of what he had to say, but I hope I may say without any discourtesy that what was less in evidence was an ability to persuade people who did not already agree with him.

Secondly, it emerged more than once from yesterday's debate that people on this side of the water perceived an inconsistency between a repeated commitment to the Union and a declared intention to frustrate the will of Parliament. In the past fortnight there have been examples of actions which were positively outside the law, and that is not seen as consistent with the repeated denunciations that we have heard of those who seek political ends by unconstitutional means, or with the demands that we have so often heard from the Unionist Benches for more vigorous law enforcement.

I pay tribute to what was said on Saturday and again yesterday by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) in making clear his opposition to violence. If his speech yesterday was, as he said, his last in the House, I should like to seize this opportunity of saying that I have valued his co-operation and personal friendship. We have all been reluctant in this debate to offer personal testimonials in case the recipient should find them embarrassing, but I would be churlish if I did not place that one on the record.

I have described some of the reasons why the unionist people are right to feel that they have lost some sympathy with the British public. I can understand why that has happened. Sometimes the feeling of insecurity leads to actions which increase the insecurity. The future of the unionist people is in danger most if they lose the sympathy of the British people.

Yesterday the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said that our past actions had brought us to where we are. The blame does not lie in any one quarter. In the history of Ireland, people on both sides of the divide have acted as I might have acted in their place. One tragedy leads to the next, with the grim inevitability of a Shakespearean plot.

One of the reasons for that insecurity is the feeling that British proposals cannot always be taken at their face value, and that suggestions which on the surface are unexciting will be used to lead the people of Northern Ireland down a road which is concealed by assurances and fair words. It is not easy in the context of the Irish experience to build up a relationship of trust.

That is why the Opposition believe that straight talking is better than pussyfooting. We have been honest and open with the unionist people about our view of the future. We believe that the future of Ireland should be as one country. We do not delude ourselves that the unionist people agree with us, but disagreeing is better than misleading people.

Having given the unionist people the bad news in plain English, I shall set it in context. We have no intention of imposing unity at gunpoint. If Ireland is one day to enjoy the peace and security which history has always denied it, it must be on the basis of a settlement achieved by consensus.

We do not merely admit, we assert, that the unionist people are entitled to retain their identity in the homes of their forefathers, and to protection for their culture, their religion and their interests, not just as we see them but as they see them.

The Forum report stated that clearly. We would not contemplate anything less. Indeed, we shall seek in time to persuade them to accept what some of us genuinely believe — that their identity, that culture, that religion and interests can survive only in a united Ireland with carefully considered constitutional safeguards and with the old grudges and the open sores consigned to history. They cannot survive in the present atmosphere of perpetual frustration, perpetual uncertainty and perpetual insecurity. I do not believe that they can survive in some hypothetical independent six counties or four counties.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: The right hon. and learned Gentleman speaks of persuading the people of Northern Ireland of the wisdom of the Labour party's policy and thought on the subject. Why does not the Labour party go about its task in the normal way as it does on any other matter in any other part of the United Kingdom — enabling people to vote for the Labour party by putting up Labour candidates in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Archer: That is one example of what my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith discussed last night. Northern Ireland is not perceived by the people of Great Britain as being part of the United Kingdom. None of the major parties here is organised in Northern Ireland. I fear that the right hon. Gentleman must accept that. It is a fact of history.

But this agreement is not about that debate. It is about a framework for discussions; it is about breaking away from the present stalemate; it is about talking and listening. It commits no one to renounce a view in which he believes; it asks no one to resile from any cherished aspiration; it prevents no one from making suggestions or holding conversations with anyone else about any topic. It is not a step down any specific road; it is not the thin end of any wedge; it is not the first raindrop in any deluge.

In this debate, we have heard it argued with passion that the agreement is the first step towards the dissolution of

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the Union. We have heard it argued with equal intensity by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) that it represents the total abandonment of any aspiration to Irish unity. I do not believe that it is either. I believe that if the people in both traditions are to have a chance of considering the options open to them, and if we are ever to embark on the discussions aimed at persuading one another, we must get away from the sloganising, the posturing and the caricaturing of those from whom we differ and the rejection of offers before they are made.

If we are to perceive the various visions of the future from which to choose, we must clear away the fog. Because I believe that this accord may make a modest contribution towards that process, I shall invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote in the Aye Lobby tonight. Since we all believe in our power to persuade others when the options are all on view, I believe that the Opposition will be able to persuade the people of Northern Ireland to choose the option in which we believe. It is in that sense that I see it as the first step.

I add my tribute to that by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition to those who helped to conclude the agreement. I do not believe that they were motivated by any consideration but the hope of contributing to the achievement of peace and co-operation. I pay ungrudging tribute to the Secretary of State, whose accession to his high office was associated at the outset with a readiness to talk and to listen, which has not always been apparent on the Government Benches, and was not apparent in the days following the Forum report and "The Way Forward".

I extend that tribute to Dr. FitzGerald, to Dick Spring and to Peter Barry. For them, this was an act of courage. They agreed to words in the document which represented substantial concessions which were not universally popular in nationalist circles.

There can be no prospect of a consensus unless all those involved are prepared to make concessions. We can all argue for consensus on the basis that other people agree with us. We do not make history just by keeping our heads down. There can be no reconciliation, no meeting of minds, no hope for Northern Ireland, without leaders on both sides of the divide who dare to lead.

One consequence of the unhappy history is that language itself ceases to be a means of communication, or an instrument for understanding one another, and becomes the occasion for misunderstanding and conflict.

There have been long disputations about whether the agreement represents a change of sovereignty. Phrases like "sovereignty", "executive and consultative status" and "constitutional" are terms of art. They are the constitutional lawyers' tools of the trade. As a constitutional lawyer, I warn the House against constitutional lawyers. They should be our servants, not our masters. Their function is to state with precision a consensus which has been reached about how people want to be governed. The time to use their terminology is when that consensus has been achieved. Indeed, they sometimes find that such expressions apply to such a wide range of concepts and are so ambiguous that it is better not to use them even at that stage.

If such words are introduced into the discussion at the outset before there is agreement on what kind of community we want to achieve, they will serve only to occasion misunderstandings, to shorten tempers and to grind discussion to a standstill.

If I may be allowed a personal comment as a constitutional lawyer, I wonder whether those who come after us will understand what the debate was about—not those 300 years from now but 30 years on. I suspect that the terminology of the nation state is most appropriate to a world which is already passing.

Many Governments have a legitimate interest in decisions affecting the internal affairs of another country. They may have the right to express a view not only about matters which affect their own citizens, but about fair treatment for the citizens of that country.

The international instruments on human rights recognise that the 19th-century concept of sovereignty is outmoded. The present United Kingdom Government have properly pressed for the implementation of the Helsinki accords. I suspect that the assumption that every square foot of the earth's surface must lie within the exclusive jurisdiction of one nation state and that no other Government must presume to intervene may not prove to be appropriate to the way in which the human race wishes to order its affairs in the 21st century.

More than once in the debate it has been argued that the agreement will be seen as having been achieved by violence. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley spoke of it as the next instalment of Danegeld. There will undoubtedly be voices among the paramilitaries and their supporters making that claim, but I am troubled when the claim is echoed and endorsed in more authoritative quarters, for two reasons. First, the argument could be applied to any proposal which is acceptable to nationalist opinion. There is no suggestion, no experiment, no movement away from the status quo and the present stagnation which would not be susceptible to that argument. If that is accepted, there can be no movement, and no hope.

Secondly, I am troubled because I do not believe that the men of violence want the proposal to succeed. Far from acclaiming it as a success, they want to see it fail. If nothing could be embarked upon lest the paramilitaries might claim it as a victory, the paramilitaries might feel that they could bring any policy to a standstill by some act of violence. They would then tell themselves that everyone would rush to say, "We must not do this because it would appear to be responding to violence." Those who do not wish to see a movement towards peace and reconciliation would know that it could be frustrated by the shedding of blood.

There is no guarantee of the success of the conference. That depends on how it is used, and on the good faith and common sense of both Governments. The conference is simply the upturned glass into which its members must pour the practical contents. The British Government will need to show that they are prepared to listen to the representations of the Republic without creating the impression that there is a closed enclave from which everyone else is excluded. To consult the Republic must not be an alternative to consulting anyone else.

The Government of the Republic must use the opportunity, not to settle old scores, but to build bridges, not to reopen wounds, but to heal scars. I give notice that, having supported the Government in the Lobby tonight, we shall give the proposal a break, and that we shall judge it on how it is applied, and what is achieved in practice.

When the Minister replies, will he tell the House a little more about the content and procedure which the Government have in mind for the conference? I do not expect him to tell us in advance what the Irish Government will say before they say it, nor am I seeking a commitment about the Government's response to hypothetical situations. But may I mention some of the topics which many people in Northern Ireland hope will be raised because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, yesterday, they want to see the conference used to improve the condition of daily life. Some of them are less interested in the vocabulary of constitutional discourse than in pragmatic issues of day-to-day living.

The people of Northern Ireland want to see questions raised about those unemployment levels to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) referred yesterday, and some suggestions for renewing the economy and creating jobs. Some measures will obviously entail detailed co-operation between the two parts of Ireland.

A common transport policy would make a great deal of sense, and it would entail some capital projects which could set human beings to work to meet the needs of human beings. When I travel from London to Belfast, or the other way, I have a choice of flights, and when I travel between London and Dublin I have a choice of flights. But last week when I travelled from Belfast to Dublin, there were no scheduled flights between the two cities.

Many people will hope to hear that the conference has discussed the future of the gas industry to see whether 1,000 jobs can be saved, and whether consumers can have the choice of fuel, which is open to citizens of the rest of the United Kingdom and of almost every other part of Europe. They will want to see raised the condition of some of the hospitals which have been the subject of a united protest by people from both traditions.

There are at present people in London who would take a warmer view of the project if it were used to discuss the living conditions of tenants in the Divis flats. I hope that hon. Gentlemen will take the opportunity to visit the exhibition at the Town Planning Institute, which opened yesterday, about life for people in the Divis. And it is not only those on one side of the political divide who wish to hear discussions on housing.

In a recent poll among tenants of the White City complex, only 0·7 per cent. were happy with their treatment by the authorities, and 62 per cent. regarded their treatment as "poor or very poor." Residents of the Divis flats believe that there is no solution to their problems except demolition, but they are not being listened to. Tenants of White City complain that proposals for demolition were sprung on them without consultation. Therefore, there is material for the conference to discuss.

People on both sides of the sectarian divide wish that someone would look closely at the operation of the Payment for Debt Act. They suggest, not that people should not pay their debts, but that it is wrong that payment should be enforced without proper control by the courts and without taking proper account of a family's needs. If the two Governments read that Act, they will see why there is such intense feeling about it.

We have been told that the conference will be used at an early stage to discuss ways of enhancing security co-operation. That is welcome news. It has improved in some respects, but there is still scope for improvement. According to the joint communiqué, the Governments also propose devoting some of their initial meetings to

"seeking measures which would give substantial expression to the aim of underlining the importance of public confidence in the administration of justice."

I doubt whether the literary style of the document will qualify for the Nobel prize for literature, but we can forgive that. I hope that that means that there will be some early discussions on the super-grass trials, and the delays in bringing cases to court. I hope that it will be interpreted widely, and will include the strip searching of women prisoners in Armagh, including those who have not even been convicted. That is causing genuine and deep resentment. I hope that it will be construed widely enough to include the use of plastic bullets.

Yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition referred to the implementation of the Baker report. We would prefer to see more radical changes than those suggested by Sir George Baker, but I understand that on 8 November the Committee for the Administration of Justice was told that there were not even proposals to implement the Baker report this Session. Perhaps the conference should discuss that. To put the matter at its lowest, there is room to debate whether some of the existing measures contribute to security, or whether they are counter-productive because they are seen as oppressive and unfair.

I know that the Government would not greatly wish to see those issues placed on the agenda, because they do not agree with the criticisms. But that will be the test of the Government's commitment to making the conference work. It is not whether they will respond to suggestions which they welcome but how they will react to suggestions which they would prefer not to hear that will be the measure of their good faith. If, after a period, there are no changes in those matters, the agreement may well be seen as seeking to legitimise the present position.

While I do not ask for firm guarantees in advance of the discussions, it may help some hon. Members to make up their minds, about the agreement if the Minister assures us that the Government will listen sympathetically to any suggestions which are made on those issues.

Mr. Dalyell: Is not part of the problem the fact that the Government appear to have said rather different things to different people, and talked with forked tongues? The House is being told one thing, yet the Irish Minister of Justice, Mr. Noonan, has appeared on American television saying that the Republic has been given a major and substantial role in the day-to-day running of Northern Ireland. How are they to be reconciled? It is dangerous to say different things to different people at the same time about the same subject.

Mr. Archer: I understand my hon. Friend's anxieties. Everything will depend on how the agreement is implemented. If it is not implemented in good faith, we cannot expect anything from it, but it offers an opportunity to discuss issues which many of us would like to see discussed. We can only wait to see what the Government's reaction is if those issues are raised.

Will the Minister give the House further information about the way in which the conference is intended to work? In the joint communiqué we were told that the two Governments envisaged that normally neither meetings of

[Mr. Archer]

the conference nor the agenda would be announced. I understand that that means that we shall not be told about them in advance.

I heard the answer that the Prime Minister gave to the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) and I heard with interest what the Secretary of State said about that point today. I understand that the proceedings cannot take place wholly in public. There is much to be said for an atmosphere in which words can be exchanged without being subjected to textual analysis in the columns of every newspaper. But if we are not given a full and frank report, suspicions will breed and multiply. Those who were not present will suspect that others are privy to the discussions and have been consulted. Those who are not told what is being discussed will guess, and they will guess the worst. I hope that the Minister will tell us a little more about that when he replies.

How widely or narrowly is it envisaged that the agenda will range? Will the Government of the Republic be able to raise individual questions? I assume that the machinery is not intended to operate as what the Secretary of State calls a complaints commission, but clearly the Government of the Republic will be under pressure to include innumerable individual cases, such as the failure of the Housing Executive to decorate a particular house. The proposals could then founder beneath the sheer weight of the agenda items. However, some individual cases may merit inclusion. Perhaps we could be told a little more about the Government's thinking on that.

If the Republic makes a suggestion and the United Kingdom Government are minded to agree, what happens next? Who else will be consulted? There is a feeling among many parties in Northern Ireland that they will not have an opportunity to comment on the proposals. They are afraid that what promises to be a framework for talking and listening may actually be used to exclude some people from having a voice.

Perhaps the Minister can tell us at what stage the opinion of other parties in Northen Ireland will be canvassed. Will it be done before the proposals are formulated, in such a way that the Government have painted themselves into a corner? Perhaps the same problem will arise about consultations with parties in the House.

We in the Labour party say that the conference should be given a chance. That does not entail a promise to endorse everything which may emerge from it. The conference will be on trial, and it will be by its fruits that we shall know it. But we know the consequences of the status quo and the present stagnation and we do not think it right to reject half a loaf because it is not a feast. History will tell who among us is right and who is mistaken. It will also distinguish between those who tried and those who simply despaired.

4.32 pm

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): I strongly support the agreement and I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State on having negotiated it. I pay tribute to the predecessors of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who I know did much of the spadework on this agreement, and to the officials from our Government and those from the Government of the Republic of Ireland who have toiled tirelessly to bring it about.

However, I make one point to the Government. I beg of them not to underplay the agreement. It could serve a most useful purpose. The Government will be attacked, as they were in the House, from both sedentary and a standing positions, and they will be unscrupulously misrepresented in the Province, but there is nothing to be gained from underplaying the usefulness of the agreement.

The leader of the Official Unionists said yesterday that there is nothing in the agreement that was not in the Sunningdale agreement, and that is right. There was the recognition by the Government of the Republic that there can be no change without the full consent of the people of Northern Ireland. We put the fact that there can be no change without that consent into the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, and it is firmly there from Parliament as a whole. The fact that the Sunningdale agreement was to be registered as an international treaty is also correct and that point is rightly repeated here. There is nothing to be gained from overplaying the agreement but a great deal to be lost from underplaying it.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), in a moving speech, said yesterday that we could not go on as we are. Many of us have felt that deeply for a long time, but it is not necessarily an argument for making a change of this kind. The agreement serves a positive purpose—to bring about a closer relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The useful outcome of that could be a much greater effort to deal with the strife inside the Province. Most of us have long recognised that there can be no purely police or military solution to the problem. If we do not realise it after 16 years, I do not know when we shall. There must be a combination of political action with police and military action. This agreement will allow much closer co-operation along those lines.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) whose integrity we greatly respect, said yesterday that we must try to understand the Protestants of Northern Ireland. I agree, but we have also to try to understand the Catholics in Northern Ireland, particularly after 50 years of one-party rule, which lasted until Stormont was suspended. We have to try to understand the situation in the Republic if we are to have a sound solution.

I have tried to understand these different points of view over a long period going back into the distance when I was Chief Whip here, and Brian Faulkner was in Stormont. I confess that I have always found the Irish, all of them, extremely difficult to understand. Shortly after I became Prime Minister, I held a meeting of the three Prime Ministers at Chequers. It was the first time that the three Prime Ministers in these tiny islands had met for nearly 50 years. It is astonishing that we could carry on in the modern world in such a way.

I was struck forcibly by the fact that the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and the Taoiseach of the Republic spent a great deal of their time reminiscing about their times together, the university to which they went together, their education together, what they had done together and how they were working out everything together. I was the odd man out, and nobody cared about the odd man out because the Northern Ireland Prime Minister and the Taoiseach were working so closely together. It has always been said that we English cannot understand any of the

Irish, and one just has to accept that, although we are all part of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. It is because we want to work closely together that I so strongly support this agreement.

In 1961, when I began the negotiations for British membership of the European Community, I went to Belfast to discuss this matter with the Government of Northern Ireland. Lord Brookeborough was then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and I had a meeting with him and his Cabinet. They were on my side, perhaps a little to my surprise. I was told that this was so because the entrance of Britain and the Republic of Ireland into the European Community would enable us to establish a much closer working relationship, which would remove many of the problems that then existed between North and South.

In particular, they believed that it would help to deal with the threat which they felt at the time, that, because of the higher standard of living in the Province, people would always try to move across the border from the Republic into the Province. This was a threat to their organisation of industry and employment and the figures of unemployment. The Republic of Ireland has considerably improved its standard of living in the past 10 years since it became a member of the Community, and that particular threat no longer exists.

Nobody can doubt that the Government of the Republic find great difficulty with some public opinion in taking effective action on security matters. Here, above all, they can help. It is because I believe that the present Government of the Republic has been the most helpful of all the Governments with whom I have had acquaintance that I thought it was right—I said so at the time—that the Government should accept the settlement of the common agricultural policy, which gave a considerable advantage to the Republic. We were helping our friends. Some of the encouragement has borne fruit and will continue to do so. The great threat is violence in Northern Ireland and this agreement can lead to much closer co-operation between the two Governments in dealing with violence. Why should we want to maintain barriers when we are working more closely with such a large part of the world? I fail to understand the outlook of people who want to keep the barriers and indeed to profit from the barriers that exist today.

Before the troubles of 1959 and 1961 so many things were done corporately by North and South in Ireland without anyone questioning them at all. Transport, water supplies, movement of business, the free movement of personnel, were all carried on jointly and everybody accepted them as being a desirable aspect of life in an island. Today, unfortunately, one only has to mention co-operation in one sphere and there are enormous shrieks of horror. Joint action must be encouraged.

One of the advantages of the Sunningdale agreement is that it was negotiated by the parties in the Province, which were then the power-sharing Executive-elect. They had not actually taken up their positions, but they were the power-sharing Executive-elect. They took up their positions as soon as Sunningdale was signed and they worked extraordinarily effectively. The Sunningdale agreement was between the Government of the South and the parties of the North which were about to become an Executive. It meant that the parties in the North knew everything and that they would always know everything in the discussions. Unfortunately, the present agreement does not have that advantage because since the breakdown of the Sunningdale agreement, some of the parties in Northern Ireland have not been prepared, for one reason or another, to co-operate in the political process. I do not blame any particular party for that. There are representatives of those parties here today.

It makes it extremely difficult for any British Government to work out an agreement in which the political parties of the Province take part. I deeply regret that and I hope that progress will be made to a position where those political parties will become involved.

I am slightly worried that the question of devolution will cause certain items to be removed from the agenda of the Intergovernmental Conference. There is a danger that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) will object to that because it will give more power to the Official Unionists in the Province and less power to his friends. I hope that that will not happen but from experience one knows that it can. If it does happen that will make devolving particular functions to the Province—which I believe desirable—far more difficult for the Government to carry out. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and his friends will play their part in enabling devolution to take place.

I am in favour of devolution because I believe that only with devolution will there be responsibility in politics, in the press and in public opinion in the Province. Only when the people of the Province themselves are responsible will that happen. With devolution, a more moderate, reasonable and sensible attitude would be taken towards so many problems that exist in the Province. From the bottom of my heart, I wish this agreement well.

4.46 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I echo the hope of the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that this agreement will succeed. I believe that it is the wish of the vast majority of hon. Members to express to the Prime Minister and to the Taoiseach our heartfelt hope that, working together over the next few months, they will provide a better basis for the understanding of the agreement in our two countries, and particularly in Northern Ireland. Hon. Members are sad and anxious that at present there is little doubt that the agreement does not carry the support, understanding or sympathy of the vast bulk of people in Northern Ireland.

I do not think that the hon. Members who are considering resigning their seats and seeking re-election to the House need do that simply to convince hon. Members that they genuinely speak for the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. If there is a failing in England, it has often been to under-estimate the extent to which the unionist parties authentically speak for very large numbers of people in Northern Ireland. We may not like, and I have often criticised, both the style of their approach and their attitudes, but one does not have to visit Northern Ireland for long to understand that the fears and anxieties that they express in the House are truly representative of their constituents. It may be too late for those hon. Members to reconsider, but I hope that they will not feel it necessary to conduct their own form of referendum on an issue which is not in dispute in the House. We believe that they genuinely speak for the people whom they represent.

If the agreement is to work, its scope must be extended. It is worth reminding ourselves that the background for the agreement is the fact that more than 2,500 of our fellow citizens have lost their lives since 1967 and that nearly 750 of them were members of the security forces. If any hon.

[Dr. David Owen]

Members need a reminder of that terrorism, they need only look underneath the clock in the Chamber and read the memorial to Airey Neave.

It must be in the interests of all to win the confidence of the majority in Northern Ireland and particularly in the interests of the minority and of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and his party. To achieve that, we must immediately have a forum for wider debate about the Intergovernmental Conference. I hope that that will be a prominent part of the Assembly's agenda—there is no reason why it should not be. I urge the SDLP, even if it feels that it cannot return to the Assembly in full, at least to participate and take up its membership for that part of the debate concerned with the Intergovernmental Conference and the agenda, and the decisions and debate that result. That would be a concrete gesture of good will and would address the anxiety of some that, having been helpful in securing the agreement, the SDLP has no incentive to re-enter the Assembly or to involve itself in real devolved government.

The Irish Government and the Irish people have an important stand to take in the Republic by ratifying the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. I hope that they will take that action speedily because that will be a considerable reassurance that they intend to fulfil to the letter all the aspects of the agreement.

The agreement, which is a delicate hinge created between the Republic and the United Kingdom Governments, will stand or fall on the fundamental issue of how we jointly grapple with the problem of terrorism.

The Prime Minister, like most hon. Members, would have liked the Republic to give up that part of its constitution which claims the territory of Northern Ireland. It is undoubtedly sad that it has not felt able to carry that through for reasons connected with a referendum and the Republic's own internal political situation.

The calculation is that it is only within a framework like the agreement that the Republic could involve itself in the practical detailed cross-border arrangements that are absolutely fundamental to halt terrorism. I assume that that is the main calculation on which the Prime Minister, an admitted unionist, felt able to risk putting her signature and the authority of the Government to the agreement and asking the House to endorse it. If that is so, we must see concrete agreements and achievements in that area of security. The right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), too, in a very effective speech yesterday, made it clear that that was the issue on which he would judge the agreement.

It may be difficult for Ministers to admit this, but we know that so long as terrorists do not have a wall against their backs, so long as they can escape the day-to-day tensions of constant police surveillance and the possibility of being exposed and arraigned before the law by slipping across the border for a fortnight, it will be almost impossible to defeat terrorism and violence. At various times it has been suggested that the border should be sealed, but for political, economic and social reasons, everyone has concluded that that is impossible.

Breaking terrorism is not just a matter of military and security forces. There must also be political, economic and social agreement. All those aspects are covered by the agreement. The fundamental point, however, is that the border must be better patrolled than it is now. There must be more sharing of intelligence, joint action by the British and Irish armies and co-operation between the Garda and the RUC to an extent not seen hitherto and at a consistent and persistent level. There is no reason why there should not be a form of joint patrolling and joint helicopter patrols. Cross-border co-operation must be stepped up in a major way.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Owen: I prefer not to give way, as time is short and I wish to be brief.

If cross-border co-operation were stepped up in that way, nothing could begin to give greater confidence to the majority in Northern Ireland.

Certain other developments are also worth considering. I regret that the decision was not taken immediately to set up an Anglo-Irish parliamentary council. If, as I fundamentally believe, this is an agreement between our two Parliaments and our two Governments are to be the executors of that agreement, nothing could be more natural, proper and right than that the House was able to put the actions of the Intergovernmental Conference under parliamentary scrutiny. I believe that that would strengthen confidence in the agreement on the part of the majority in Northern Ireland. Exceptionally, we in Great Britain must accept that in any such council Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies must be given considerable weight. On this occasion we must give up a concept that we have always thought necessary—that of a natural majority for the Government of the day. We must trust Members from Northern Ireland to take the lion's share—that is perhaps too strong an expression, but at any rate a major share—of representation from the United Kingdom in any parliamentary delegation to that council.

I believe, too, that there must be proportional representation of Members from Northern Ireland in this Chamber, as there should be for the United Kingdom as a whole. *[Interruption.]* There is proportional representation in the Assembly elections for the very sensible purpose of trying to ensure representation of the minority. We should take note of that here. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members do not accept that—I realise that such a change will come only with the consent of the British people as a whole, probably through a referendum—they must allow some Members of the Assembly to be represented on the parliamentary council. Otherwise, there will not be the spread of opinion of the parliamentary parties in Northern Ireland which is so critical to the success of the council.

In "The Way Forward", the Official Unionist party advocated a bill of rights and many of us were sad that that did not come out of the agreement. I certainly hope that "The Way Forward" will not go into the dustbin. I do not think that the House took enough notice of the significant steps taken in that report by many unionists to try to convince the minority in the Province that they genuinely wanted a different type of government from that which they had experienced before. I have no doubt at all that devolved government is essential for Northern Ireland. The agreement does not take us much further towards that, and some fear that it has taken us a few steps back from it. We must give the highest priority to achieving that object.

I believe that it will always be easier to persuade people in Northern Ireland to return to devolved government in the context of a constitutional arrangement for the United Kingdom as a whole, covering legislative devolution for Scotland and greater devolution and decentralisation for Wales and the regions of England, but that is for another debate. In the immediate short term, the SDLP has a great responsibility to show by word and action that it wishes to help to create a partnership government in Northern Ireland.

Those are all for the future. I have not mentioned the past because these debates are too often dominated by the past. The agreement is still very fragile. It does not have the whole-hearted consent of the people of Northern Ireland, although I believe that it will be shown today to have the whole-hearted consent of the Westminster Parliament. Unionists who wish to live under the Westminster Parliament must listen to that voice and take note of that decision. They cannot have it both ways. The supremacy of the Westminster Parliament—I prefer that expression to the word "sovereignty"—is an absolute for all our citizens. If the vote goes against unionist Members today, I hope that they will accept that decision and live with the consequences. They can, of course, use all constitutional measures open to them. They can resign their seats to show that they speak for the people, although I am already convinced of that. What they cannot do if they are to remain true to their unionist convictions is try to overturn the decisions of this Parliament by unconstitutional means. It is to the credit of the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) that throughout what has been a difficult episode for him personally and for his party, he has made it clear that he intends to take the constitutional route, and he deserves the acclamation of us all for that.

The tone of this debate has been very different from that of Irish debates in the House through the centuries. For that, the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), too, deserves some credit, although it is not often given to him. None of us knows what will be the end result of the agreement. I can only say on behalf of the SDP and the Liberal party that we wish it well. But there is much work to be done. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said that the Prime Minister should not underplay the agreement, and I agree with him. It is potentially a very powerful agreement. It is not a modest measure. It could become a very profound and important measure if it received the whole-hearted support of all the people of the United Kingdom. The question is whether that hinge can operate evenly between the Republic and the United Kingdom. It is the responsibility of the House to ensure that the hinge operates evenly and does not discriminate in any way against the majority in Northern Ireland.

4.59 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): This will be my last speech in the House for some time. If the IRA threat conveyed to me by the police comes to fruition, it may be the last time that I address the House at all. That being so, I naturally look back to the first time I addressed the House from this Bench.

I recall that in my maiden speech I quoted the comments of the then newly elected Speaker. He said:

"At the heart of all the tensions that exist, rightly, between free citizens and which rightly divide them, we meet to resolve those tensions by free and fair debate, respecting not only one's own right to hold an opinion but equally the right of the other man to hold diametrically opposed opinions and to express them equally freely . . . And at the heart of that heart sits a neutral chairman, favouring neither side, except for his sworn duty to protect minorities". — [*Official Report*, 29 June 1970; Vol. 803, c. 7-8.]

I wish this debate was taking place in Northern Ireland between the elected representatives of Northern Ireland and on the basis of the principles set out by the Speaker on that occasion. Thus the people of Northern Ireland through their own representatives could perhaps hammer out some agreement that might be helpful in the present crisis and chaos that our Province is experiencing.

Such a debate cannot take place because one party in this House — the SDLP — whose leader, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), lectures us about the sovereignty of this House, refuses to come to an Assembly set up by this House for the purpose of discussing, and finding some solution to, the questions before us.

During the first debate in which I participated, Lord Wilson of Rievaulx, then Leader of the Opposition, concurred with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), the Prime Minister of the day, in giving a solemn promise, which I repeated in my speech, when I said that the

"people in every section of the community in Northern Ireland, irrespective of their political views and religious beliefs, . . . were entitled to the same equality of treatment." — [*Official Report*, 3 July 1970; Vol. 803, c. 227.]

The opposition of all Unionists to the Hillsborough agreement is because that principle is basely violated by this agreement. There is nothing in this agreement for the majority.

The hon. Member for Foyle, when he addressed the House yesterday — he always lectures in absolutes; he would argue for a united Ireland or nothing — said, "There is no other road." I am entitled, representing the people of Northern Ireland, to look down that road which I am asked to travel with the people that I represent.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup said that all the parties in Northern Ireland were represented at Sunningdale. That is entirely untrue. The promise was given in the White Paper, that all parties would be represented, but because of the representations from the Dublin Government, three unionist parties in Northern Ireland were rejected from that conference. I refer to the group led by Mr. Harry West, who later led the Official Unionist party, Mr. Craig of the Vanguard unionist party and the party that I have the honour to represent, the Democratic Unionists. They were kept outside the doors of Sunningdale and now the entire unionist family has been kept outside the doors. The Sunningdale agreement did not work when two thirds of the unionists were outside the doors. What will happen now the door is closed to all unionists?

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) more or less read a homily to us about the supremacy of this House, but this House also has an obligation under the laws that it makes to the people of every place in the United Kingdom. There is a solemn obligation passed by this House — in fact I had the honour to move the amendment so that it could become law—that the people of Northern Ireland, if faced with any change in the status of Northern Ireland would have a say. We are not now to have that say. That is the grievance that the people of Northern Ireland have.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

The hon. Member for Foyle said there is no other road. I am entitled to ask whence this road comes and whither it goes. Only the foolish would commit themselves to a road without examining it. People may say what they like about unionists and loyalists but the unionists in Northern Ireland include Roman Catholics as well as Protestants. The House should remember that. We know this to be true because the European and Assembly elections are run under the proportional representation system. So we know for certain how localities are voting and what their preferences are.

It might surprise the House to know that thousands of people who put a first vote for the hon. Member for Foyle in the first European election, put their second vote for me. They were not adamant Protestants like myself; they belonged to a different faith. I did not need their votes, because I was elected on the first count but the hon. Member for Foyle needed transfer votes. I needed transfer votes less the last time, although I was told in this House by colleagues that I would never attain the same vote again. I am glad that I more than attained it the next time, as I had a record vote, bigger than any vote given to any candidate at any election in the United Kingdom.

I was told by one colleague that the Government Whips had said that my power in Northern Ireland had waned. I welcome an election. As soon as I can, I will come before the electorate again because I believe that the only discipline in a democracy is the ballot box. I have been defeated in elections, I have won elections, but I have always accepted the ballot box. *[Interruption]* The hon. Gentleman does not know the hard road by which I came to this House. I did not always have a majority. I saw candidates lose their deposits time and again, but I did not lose faith in the democratic method. The right hon. Member for Devonport said that I do not get much credit for that, but what does it matter? The best thing for a man in this place is to know that his people are for him. The important thing is that the grass roots that I represent know that I represent them the way they should be represented.

This morning the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and I took part in a radio phone-in and Roman Catholics paid tribute to both of us for the way in which we work for both sections of the community. I defy any Member of this House to go to my constituency and show me Roman Catholics that I have not faithfully represented. The Ministers on the Front Bench know that. I represent all the people of my constituency.

This agreement came out of the Forum, which was a proposal of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume). It was to be a purely nationalist organisation. Dr. Garret FitzGerald wished to enlarge it, but how could unionists go to something which was planning their destruction? No self-respecting unionist went and consequently we had the Forum report. The Prime Minister had some strong words to say about its recommendations. She said, "Out, out, out." There was no sense of triumphalism in Northern Ireland when she said it. I did not see people marching and saying, "That is great, the Prime Minister is on our side." We just accepted reality. Even Labour spokesmen now say that that was the right stance and that it was not possible to pursue the route offered by the Forum report. Little did we know that, after saying that, the Prime Minister would do a complete turnabout. As the Leader of the Opposition said, she made a change. I should like to consider that change.

The road was engineered for all of the people of Northern Ireland, but the amazing thing is that the majority who must walk it and who feel that it is uphill and a hard path, were not consulted at all whereas the minority who will use it for their own ends were consulted at every turn. On television, Mr. McGrady the SDLP's chief whip, said that at every turn of the consultations his leader and party were consulted. I asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to condemn the Dublin Government's breaking of confidentiality, but he did not see fit to do so. If he is not prepared to do that when we are preparing the structure, what will happen when the structure is complete?

The conference is not between Ministers of the South and Ministers of the North but three ways, between the Republic, the SDLP and Northern Ireland Ministers. That means that the SDLP can go to see Ministers as public representatives and come to the Assembly if they want to —they do not come—and, best of all, they have the ear of the Dublin Government, through which they can put their views. The hon. Member for Foyle then has the cheek to tell me that the agreement is the only road. The Ulster people will not be walking that road. I am not talking about rioting that might take place. That is just what republicans are worried about. There has been no rioting among loyalists.

I read that Garret FitzGerald said in Dublin that when the riots start in Northern Ireland and Mrs. Thatcher calls in the troops and sets the RUC against loyalists, the agreement will stick. Protestant people accept the leadership that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley and I are attempting to provide. We will not fall into that trap. There will be no rioting on the streets or civil commotion. We will use democratic principles. I hope that the House respects that. I hope that it will ensure that fair play is given to those who use democratic principles.

If the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley, I and the colleagues around us do not return to the House and the Government have others to deal with, I could dare to prophesy what will happen in Northern Ireland. We shall be going into uncharted waters. Many right hon. and hon. Members have deep feelings on this matter and will defeat us overwhelmingly in the Lobby. We know that we are heading for defeat, but those who will defeat us are not living on the border. They are not following the funeral processions. They are not mothers of policemen. They are not wives of policemen. Nor are they the wives or mothers of UDR men. Those are the people to whom the House had better pay attention. I am trying as best I can to put the case that they have put to me.

The people who made the road are not sure whether it is well made but say that we should take it. The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) told us about Mr. Noonan's speech in America. He has a view of the agreement that is entirely different from that put forward by the Government. The Government tell me that nothing is changed, that the UDR will remain under their authority, that there will be no change in the British Army and that security is in the hands of the House and that this House alone is responsible, and that Ministers are responsible to it. When the Taoiseach arrived home from Hillsborough, he had something entirely different to say. He stepped off the plane and said:

"in the future, the UDR will operate differently from the way in which it has operated for the last 12 years . . . That means that from now on as soon as this can be put into effect"—

that is before this Parliament met to discuss the matter—

"the position at present where the UDR can hold people up on the road, stop them, search them, question them, will no longer operate."

The UDR is the only defence of people living on the border. I was in a home on the border the other day. The last time they saw a police officer was four years ago, yet they have suffered the deepest of trial—the husband was taken, hooded and kidnapped for four hours. Their only defence is the UDR.

I am not criticising the police—there are calls for the police which, if answered, would result in their being killed on the way there or on the way back. We are in a very difficult situation. If the UDR cannot stop terrorists and question them and arrest them, we shall be in more serious trouble than ever before. We must face up to that fact.

What is more, the Dublin premier said:

"The question of how security should be organised in Northern Ireland is one for the Conference."

I suggest that it is a matter for this House and Ministers who are answerable to this House, not any conference. I do not trust the information that would be given at a conference as, by various means, it would get into the hands of those who would get it to terrorists. It is hard enough to have security in Northern Ireland without handing it over to an open conference such as that.

Michael Noonan, the Republic's Justice Minister, commented on the Taoiseach's remark that "the first thing that they will do in the Forum is try to curb the paramilitary UDR". The UDR is not a paramilitary group but a regiment of the British army. It is under the authority of the British Army. But here we have an Irish Minister telling us what he will do with a British Army regiment at the conference. If anything should be done with a British Army regiment, it should be done in order in this House and through the Ministers responsible.

I know that things have happened in the police force and in the UDR, but the whole regiment is not condemned because a few people step out of line. Such people were brought into line. They were arrested and put through the courts. Some are serving their sentences. That is how it should be done. Members of other regiments have done dastardly deeds in Northern Ireland and have been dealt with in the same way.

These people are not sure what the road is. They are not sure about the status of their own document. That seriously worries the people of Northern Ireland. They are exceptionally sensitive to any attempt to take them out of the United Kingdom. Anyone who has read history should understand that this did not start in 1920, but goes far back to the days of the plantation settlement and back into the dim and distant past. There have been continued efforts to destroy the British presence in Ireland. Republicans consider me and my supporters as the British garrison. We were told recently that every Brit had to get out. I am proud to be British; I was born British and I shall remain British.

I have no time for UDI. Although people have said that Ulster nationalism has suddenly bloomed, I have not seen any Ulster nationalism. The 200,000 people at city hall were calling not for Ulster nationalism, but for equal rights within the United Kingdom, where they should be allowed to stay without any pressures put upon them.

The agreement has something to say about the status of Northern Ireland. It affirms:

"Any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland".

But nowhere in the document is the status of Northern Ireland defined. What is the status of Northern Ireland? To me and to this Parliament, this is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. That is not the Republic's position. Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution claim jurisdiction over that part of the United Kingdom.

In the Sunningdale agreement there was a difference between what the Irish Government said and what the British Government said. I refreshed my memory of this today. I noticed how carefully the communiqué is printed in *Hansard* and I suggest that every hon. Member reads it. It states:

"The Irish Government fully accepted and solemnly declared that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland until a majority of the people of Northern Ireland desired a change in that status."

That is no different from what is stated in the new agreement. It is nonsense for the Prime Minister to say that this is the first time, because it happened before.

The communiqué stated:

"The British Government solemnly declared that it was, and would remain, their policy to support the wishes of the majority of people of Northern Ireland. The present status of Northern Ireland is that it is part of the United Kingdom."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 1973; Vol. 866, c. 37.]

The Governments' declarations were different in the Sunningdale agreement. Mr. Boland took the Southern Government to court because of the alleged violation of the Irish constitution. Only when the Prime Minister and those responsible went to court and swore solemnly that it was a political declaration of the fact could they get themselves off the hook.

Everyone agrees that the majority of people of Northern Ireland must have the final say, but what can I say to those people when they ask, "What if they do not let us have the final say?" The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said yesterday that he believed that the status of Northern Ireland had been changed. If a former Minister believes that, can we blame the ordinary Ulster Protestant or unionist Catholic for thinking the same? Are they not entitled to draw the same conclusion? That is why it would be better for the House to accept that there has been a change of status and to test it with a referendum. That is why Unionist Members must resign and go to the country.

There is a crisis in our land. The only thing that will steady our people is the opportunity to do something. Constitutionalists must be asked to vote with their feet. That is what Ulster people want, and the House could help by facilitating the by-elections and the moving of the writs. I warn the House that if any hon. Member tries to prevent Ulster from being represented in the House, he will reap the consequences. The House cannot blame the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley or me. The House should facilitate those who want this to remain a constitutional battle, not one in the streets of our cities. No matter how hon. Members feel about me or those whom I represent, I trust that they will do nothing to hinder us in moving the writs and having the elections at a proper and honest time.

I was on the radio programme "Behind the Headlines" and one of the speakers was John Kelly. The hon. Member for Foyle will know who I am speaking about. Mr. Kelly

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is a prominent constitutional lawyer, author of a book on the Eire constitution, a former Attorney General and a member of Fine Gael—Dr. FitzGerald's party. No one could question his authority. He was asked why the Republic's Government had not spelt out that the status of Northern Ireland was as an integral part of the United Kingdom. The interviewer said:

"You seem to be saying in your answer that the absence of the words 'Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom' is deliberate. That is to say, the Irish Government could not deliver that."

I know that the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) had some things to say about constitutional lawyers, even though he professes to be one. John Kelly said:

"I am not saying it is deliberate, but I am saying that a formulation which was in clear conflict with the words of our article 3 is outside the power of our Government to make."

The Eire Government cannot give us an undertaking.

What worries the people of Northern Ireland is article 3 of the agreement. It talks about:

"the majority of the people of Northern Ireland."

It does not say a large majority; it could mean a bare majority. We are told that the House wishes to safeguard the minority, but what if the minority changes? I was told by a man today, "You will be bred out anyway in 20 years." I heard that when I was a boy of 12 and they are still breeding us out. But it is interesting to remember that Roman Catholic unionists also breed. I say nothing about the virility of the Protestants.

There is no safeguard here for the minority. If the population is 49·9 per cent. Protestant and the remainder is Roman Catholic or nationalist, the Government will seek to establish a united Ireland. Legislation will be introduced and supported in the respective Parliaments to give effect to the wish of an undefined majority. Why do they not talk about "widespread support in the future?" We are constantly told that there cannot be government without widespread support. However, the status of Northern Ireland can be changed. It is noticeable that no other option is given. Will we be told that the House is sovereign and that down that road we shall have to go? The majority of Ulster people will never go down that road. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman believes that he can persuade them, he should stand in one of the by-elections, put his money where his mouth is and use his energies there. He will need his friends to put up his deposit and election expenses.

I am especially sad today because Northern Ireland had much going for it. The economy was a little brighter and there was a small improvement in what really matters—in the bread-and-butter issues that lie as dear to my heart as they do to the hearts of other hon. Members. It is appalling that, instead of the Government concentrating their efforts on getting the SDLP into the Assembly that was set up by the House, they were prepared to go down this road of folly.

In my entire career I have never seen such unity among unionists. Everyone knows my religious convictions, and anyone who said that I always agreed with the Irish Presbyterian Church—the largest Protestant church in Northern Ireland—would be laughed at. However, at a meeting of the governmental committee of that church I encountered a noted liberal whose theology and mine are miles apart. He said to me, "This is another Munich agreement. I say that because the Munich agreement settled the future of a people who were never consulted." The majority of the people in Northern Ireland were not consulted about this agreement. He also said that the Munich agreement was sold as a programme for peace. But what happened? It was the beginning of the greatest war that Europe had ever had. When a liberal churchman says that, people who would not listen to me or to my colleagues should pay attention.

It is not only those who take a strong unionist stand and who are political activists who are against the agreement. The entire Protestant community and a large section of the Roman Catholic community are against it. A letter was read to the House yesterday; I could have brought along sheaves of letters from people whose religious beliefs are very different from mine, but who are saying exactly the same as I am: that the agreement has driven a division between Protestants and Roman Catholics that should not have been driven. It has divided communities and households.

I say to the hon. Member for Foyle that the time will come when he must make up his mind whether he wishes to talk to the elected representatives of the Northern Ireland people or whether his only interest is in Dublin and in the affairs of the Irish Republic. For one year, my party worked hard to bring him to the conference table. We were even prepared to go outside the Assembly, although we believed that the Assembly was the proper place for discussions. He was invited to present his case to the devolution committee of the Assembly, but he refused to attend. The Official Unionist party and its leader did the same. The Alliance party did the same. The hon. Member for Foyle chose to speak to the army council of the IRA, knowing when he did so that the unionist door would be shut because of our stand against the IRA.

The hon. Member for Foyle will have to learn that he must live with the majority. I have learnt to live with the minority. Only when representatives of his party come round the table, not as inferiors but as equals with us—as Ulstermen elected under the same system, whether it is proportional representation or any other—can we make progress. I objected to proportional representation, but a majority will show itself under any system. Let them come round the table and talk, but let it be on the basis that no one has special privileges. There is only one way to obtain privileges in politics——

Mr. Hume: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Michael McGuire (Makerfield): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No, I will not give way—[HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I will give way to the hon. Member for Foyle. I was not about to give way to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McGuire).

The only way in which a politician can obtain special privileges is through the ballot box. I should tell the hon. Member for Foyle that I will not talk in the terms of this agreement, for this agreement is treachery. As a unionist, I will not sit down and talk to anyone in the terms of this agreement, because it has destroyed the power of the representatives of the majority to negotiate properly on behalf of their people. Their power has been effectively removed.

Mr. Hume: As the House will have gathered, the reverend gentleman from Antrim, North is neither reverend nor gentle.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Had I known the hon. Gentleman was going to say that, I would not have given way.

Mr. Hume: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman gave way. The reverend gentleman has said publicly that he has a well-stocked armoury ready to oppose this agreement. That is not a gentle approach to the problem. He has just said that he is willing to talk to us as equals. This agreement expresses the equal validity of both traditions in Northern Ireland. I am ready to talk to him outside that door in five minutes.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): He will not be finished in five minutes.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman's statement is an atrocious falsehood. The chief whip of the SDLP made a similar statement during a broadcast, and the BBC forced him to withdraw it publicly. What I said—I repeat it now—was that the constitutionalists of Northern Ireland and the Protestants have many weapons in their armoury. I was talking about resigning seats and about withdrawing consent. I was talking about tactics. Indeed, two days previously, a Minister said that he had many weapons in his armoury to fight something. But because I said it, I am branded. Indeed, the story got the Irish twist. In the end, it was said that I had a cache of arms hidden away. I tell the hon. Gentleman that if I had a cache of arms——

Mr. Hume: Does the hon. Gentleman want to talk?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes. I will talk on the terms of equality, but the equality of the unionist people has been destroyed by this document. If the hon. Gentleman gives up the document, I will talk to him at any time, as I said previously. He wants an advantage, but that advantage will not be given to him.

I am sorry that I have detained the House for so long, but it will not hear from me again for some time, and perhaps never again. Elections are unpredictable. My last words to hon. Members are plain. When they go through the Lobby in their hundreds tonight, let them remember the people of Northern Ireland; remember their sorrows; remember their heartaches; and remember that their unionist representatives cannot all be wrong. I have had deep differences with my colleagues on the other side of the House. We have fought as bitterly about issues on which we felt strongly as has anyone in this House; but on this matter, the unionist people are absolutely united. The House should at least listen to them; and, having listened to them, should realise that if we are to treat the minority correctly, we must also treat the majority correctly. Let us all be equal. I ask for no special privilege, and no one should have a special privilege over me. Negotiations must begin and continue on a basis of equality.

I regret that by passing this motion, the House will be putting into the hands of the SDLP a weapon that will destroy for ever any chance of devolution in Northern Ireland. That is exactly what is going to happen.

When it was announced that Stormont was away and the trouble was over, I said that it was only beginning. How right I was. It is only beginning and it only began then. Before one tears something away, one must ensure that there is something better to put in its place. The House tore away the B Specials and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. There is now a plan to tear away the UDR and to change the police force in Northern Ireland. If that happens under the agreement, it will not be the House that will pay, but the people of Northern Ireland, whom I am trying feebly, but I trust passionately, to represent in the House.

5.40 pm

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): When a journalist described my reaction to the Prime Minister's statement on 18 November, he said that it was the most bitter of all. I should like to believe that, while it might have been the most bitter of all, the bitterness was conveyed with dignity. As I try to explain that bitterness, I hope that I shall also conduct myself with dignity.

The agreement deals with my most cherished ideals and aspirations. On three occasions in the week prior to the signing of the agreement, on the Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, I stood in the House, having been told in essence by foreign journals what the agreement contained, and it was denied to me that an agreement existed or had even been reached.

I went to Hillsborough on the Friday morning, despite the obstacles put in my way by the Northern Ireland Office, the headquarters of the RUC, the divisional commander in Lisburn and the police commander in Hillsborough. I stood outside Hillsborough, not waving a Union flag—I doubt whether I will ever wave one again—not singing hymns, saying prayers or protesting, but like a dog and asked the Government to put in my hand the document that sold my birthright. They told me that they would give it to me as soon as possible. Having never consulted me, never sought my opinion or asked my advice, they told the rest of the world what was in store for me.

I stood in the cold outside the gates of Hillsborough castle and waited for them to come out and give me the agreement second-hand. It is even more despicable that they could not even send one of their servants to give it to me. I had been told three hours before that it would be brought out to me. At 2.45 pm, 15 minutes after the press conference had begun, I asked a policeman whether he would bring me the declaration that betrayed everything that I had ever stood for. A senior police officer went into Hillsborough castle, asked for the document and brought it out to me.

I felt desolate because as I stood in the cold outside Hillsborough castle everything that I held dear turned to ashes in my mouth. Even in my most pessimistic moments, reading the precise detail in the Irish press on the Wednesday before, I never believed that the agreement would deliver me, in the context that it has, into the hands of those who for 15 years have murdered personal friends, political associates and hundreds of my constituents. I hope that no one else in the House ever has to stand outside the gates of anywhere and see his most cherished privileges and ideals turn to dust and ashes in his mouth. That is what it felt like to me.

For 12 years I have asked for only one thing in the House. I believed voices on this Bench, no doubt well-intentioned but foolish, telling me that the House of Commons would one day treat me in the same way as my fellow citizens. I listened to people from other parties telling me the same thing. I am glad to report that even Labour Members were telling me the same thing—if I asked the House to treat me like my fellow citizens,

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conferring no special privileges or benefits, and I would simply meet my obligations, one day I hoped they would treat me like my fellow citizens.

I pursued that and I told the people of Northern Ireland that. When I walked behind nine funerals in one day and could not console the people, I told them that. When we buried Sir Norman Stronge, Her Majesty's lieutenant in county Armagh, and his son on the same day, I told them, "Don't worry; the House of Commons is above party. It has a responsibility to cherish all the children of the nation." That was said in the proclamation of 1916. I thought that I belonged to the nation, and I thought that the House had an obligation to cherish me as it cherished the rest. When I read the agreement, I realised that that would never be the case.

I have lost 12 years. I have only one complaint. Why was I not told 12 years ago? There are one or two honourable exceptions. The right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) told me four or five years ago as precisely as he could. Another prominent member of the Government Front Bench, a very gentle man whose integrity would be accepted by everyone in the House, tried to nudge me towards that realisation nine years ago. I was not prepared to believe it. I thought that one day I would gain equality. Why did not successive Governments tell me that I would never be treated with equality? If I had been told, my attitude over the past 12 years would have been different. I would have looked at political developments in Northern Ireland differently.

The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) talked about unscrupulous misrepresentation. I have three children in Northern Ireland as well as my constituents, so what have I to gain by unscrupulously misrepresenting my position?

I had to go home on the Friday night after the Hillsborough agreement and tell my wife that I regretted bringing up our children to believe what hon. Members have brought their children up to believe, because they will have to live with the legacy that I have to live with. It would have been better if they had never looked at the Union flag or thought that they were British or put their trust in the House of Commons than spending the rest of their lives knowing that they are now some sort of semi-British citizen.

I shall not argue with the Secretary of State about sovereignty because the House can change what it means by that. That came out in the debate yesterday. Sovereignty is what the Government decide it is. The one thing that the right hon. Gentleman cannot deny, and that the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) did not deny, is that the way in which Northern Ireland is now governed has changed fundamentally. I am being told that I should be prepared to accept this fundamental change in the way in which Northern Ireland is governed because of article 1.

The Secretary of State accused me of parroting. I wonder what he would consider this to be. In one hour during the statement on the agreement the Prime Minister said 15 times that Northern Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom. As well as repeating that 15 times, she assured us eight times that there was no derogation of responsibility for Northern Ireland from the Government of the United Kingdom.

On those 23 occasions, the right hon. Lady felt compelled to garnish those statements with all sorts of high-falutin' language, such as:

"the most formal commitment made by any Irish Government . . . For the first time, the Republic has recognised the legitimacy of the Unionist cause . . . the best guarantee from the Republic that the people of Northern Ireland have ever had . . . This is the first time that we have had a recognition of that in writing from the Republic of Ireland . . . I believe that this is the first time in a formal international agreement that the Republic has recognised this position in Northern Ireland".—[*Official Report*, 18 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 19-31.]

I went to the Public Record Office in Northern Ireland and got a copy of another internationally binding agreement, signed by Stanley Baldwin on behalf of the British Government, by Liam Cosgrave and Kevin O'Higgins on behalf of the Government of the Irish Free State and by James Craig on behalf of the Government of Northern Ireland. It was signed on 3 December 1925 and lodged in the League of Nations on 8 February 1926. If hon. Members are interested, it is registration No. 1088, page 263, of the "League of Nations Treaty Series".

That agreement recognised the legitimacy of the state of Northern Ireland. It recognised the international frontier of Northern Ireland. Of course, five or six years later, De Valera said that it was extracted under duress. That was about four years after he had had Kevin O'Higgins murdered, who, after he had signed that agreement, described it as the best day's work that he had ever done for Ireland.

Mr. McGuire: Nobody knows who killed him.

Mr. McCusker: Indeed.

It was easy for De Valera to tear up the agreement and say that it had been extracted under duress when Kevin O'Higgins had been murdered some years previously.

Those are the people I am expected to believe and to put my trust in. Those are the people who will deliver the measures that will save my constituents. Why did they not save the people to whom I have just referred? Why did they not save the 230 of my constituents who have been murdered over the past 12 years? I have listened to Secretary of State after Secretary of State telling me that there is nothing more they can do. Secretaries of State have said, "Co-operation is so good that it cannot be improved." But now things can be done. If one pays the right price, people are prepared to stop killing unionists and those who put their trust in the British House of Commons, which itself cannot protect them.

If hon. Members are wondering why I was angry about having to stand like a dog outside Hillsborough, let me bring this document to their attention. It is produced by the Irish Labour party, entitled "Anglo-Irish Agreement", and has the photograph of Dick Spring on it. It is the party's official response to the agreement. It was issued with a covering letter by Dick Spring, dated 15 November. That was the day when the agreement was signed. Is any one suggesting to me that Dick Spring ran home to Cork immediately after signing the agreement and had this document with his photograph published and sent out to his constituents to tell them what he was doing? The document was printed perhaps two or three days before the agreement was signed, when I was being told in the House, "There is no agreement. We might not even reach an agreement."

Mr. Spring refers to other things in the document, such as the signing of the European convention. I have been told

that the first benefit of the agreement is that my constitutional position is now more secure than ever. The second is supposed to be the convention. Mr. Spring says:

"When this Convention was first introduced in 1977 it was believed we could not sign it because of the particular interpretation of our High Court of 'political offences' for extradition purposes. But in the light of the fact that our Courts now make a distinction between terrorist offences and truly political offences this obstacle has been removed. The form of any legislation giving effect to our accession to the Convention would be designed to ensure that the final decision as to whether a particular offence is political or terrorist will continue to be determined by the Courts."

The constitutional position has not changed one iota. According to the constitution, the Republic could not sign the convention. It is now able to sign the agreement because the court has moved from A to B. If the court can move from A to B, what assurance do Her Majesty's Government have that it cannot move from B to A? The decision that was taken by the High Court, which is now considered to be so significant, was on whether the gunning down of a 73-year-old widow — a non-combatant, an ordinary elderly rural widow — was a political offence. Even the High Court in Dublin could not bring itself to admit that murdering a 73-year-old widow could be construed as a political offence. That is what the decision is based on.

I wonder whether the same High Court would make the same decision if it were confronted with an extradition request for a young man who confronted an Army or police patrol and shot a member of the Regular Army or the UDR, or a policeman, escaped across the border and was arrested. I wonder whether the High Court would say that it was not a political offence when that man stood in the court and said, "As a soldier in the Irish Republican Army I killed that British invading soldier in pursuit of my political objectives." That is when the test will come. The Government have been given no assurance. Today, we are making a case on the basis that the High Court in Dublin will find that to be a criminal rather than a political offence. I wish that I could trust the Republic more on that one than on the declaration of my constitutional position.

Article 1 of the agreement is a statement of fact. The fact that two and two make four does not have to be lodged at the United Nations. I know that two and two make four. There is no definition of the status of Northern Ireland. The Sunningdale agreement has been mentioned. From our point of view, it was much better than this agreement. What does Dick Spring say? What does the deputy Prime Minister of the Government who signed the agreement say? He has an interesting observation. He also mentions the "first time". We have been told for a week now that this is the first time for us—a big benefit for us. It is also the first time for Dick Spring, who says:

"But this Agreement for the first time commits the British Government to introducing and supporting legislation for the re-unification of Ireland if and when that consent emerges. This commitment settles once and for all the argument about whether Britain wants to stay in the North".

That is why they could not say that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom.

Hon. Members can rest assured of this. I shall never have to explain to my constituents again why the Prime Minister believes that they are as British as the people of Finchley. I shall never have to listen to people telling me that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom. We shall never hear those words. They will be removed from the political dictionary of Northern Ireland.

This is where we come to the crunch, because it is where misrepresentation will occur. In return, a commitment has been given to the Irish Government that they can interfere with every aspect of life in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King *indicated dissent.*

Mr. McCusker: The right hon. Gentleman need not shake his head. This is more than a consultative role. He said that. If he wants to deny it, he can intervene. He said that on a BBC radio programme. When pushed to say why it was more than a consultative role, he said, "It has to be more than a consultative role, because if it was not Dr. FitzGerald would have no power. Oh sorry, I did not mean to use that word." *[Interruption.]* We can get out the transcript and look at it. I challenge the right hon. Gentleman to say that. Garret FitzGerald says that it is more than a consultative role. The right hon. Gentleman also said it.

I am sorry to take so much time on this, but it is important. It is more important to me and the people of Northern Ireland than to anyone else. The right hon. Gentleman has accused me of lying and misrepresenting the agreement. Let me take him through it. Is the conference concerned with every aspect of life in Northern Ireland? Can this conference discuss every aspect of the life of the people of Northern Ireland? If it cannot, will the right hon. Gentleman please stand up and tell me that it cannot? When he does not take that opportunity, I will presume that that is a reasonable statement.

The conference will be chaired by joint chairmen when it meets on its most important occasions. The right hon. Gentleman is not the chairman and his junior partner the deputy chairman. There will be joint chairmen. The joint chairman from the Republic will be a permanent Minister from the Government of the Republic. He will be joined on occasions by other Ministers from the Republic and from the Northern Ireland Office. They will be joined by advisers and others. At that conference, where they are able to discuss every aspect of life in Northern Ireland, the Government of the Republic can put forward ideas and proposals for the better government of Northern Ireland.

Therefore, we have the meeting convened with its joint chairmen, able to put on the table views and ideas about the government of my Province. Both parties can do that, but it is the fact of a foreign Government doing that which concerns me. Not only will those views and ideas be put on the table, but the British Government have entered into an international binding agreement that they will seek to remove any obstacles and reach agreement on the various ideas and proposals. The right hon. Gentleman says that that is not the case, but this international declaration states:

"In the interest of promoting peace and stability, determined efforts shall be made through the Conference to resolve any differences."

The Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, the other partner in this deal, has said that the conference could fail only if there were a series of disagreements which would show bad faith on the side of either party. He went on, when pressed, to say that many of the proposals that they would make would be taken on board.

We are told today that matters will not all be secret and that efforts will be made to tell the people of Northern Ireland what it is all about. But in essence, irrespective of whether we argue about sovereignty, a coalition will govern Northern Ireland. On one side of that coalition will

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be Her Majesty's Government and on the other side will be the Government of the Irish Republic. They will have all their Ministers and advisers with them. Proposals will be put on the table by both parties concerning every aspect of life in Northern Ireland. Determined efforts will be made to reach agreements, and that means that on most occasions agreements will be reached. When those agreements are reached, that will be the decision that is taken. If that is not the case, will the right hon. Gentleman please stand up and tell me that I am wrong? I presume that he will tell me later that I am wrong and I look forward to that.

Will the right hon. Gentleman also answer the point that I put to the Leader of the House last Thursday when I said that this agreement renders me redundant? I honestly do not know any longer what role I have as a Member of Parliament. If every aspect of life in Northern Ireland will be dealt with under the auspices of this conference—that is the case—I presume that proposals for draft orders will be considered by the conference. When they come to this House, they will do so with the approval of the conference. If that is the case, what role have I? If I manage to convince the right hon. Gentleman that there is something wrong in his proposals for a draft order, he cannot stand at the Dispatch Box and say that he will change them. That would be an act of bad faith vis-a-vis his partners in the coalition. He will have to go back to them and say that there is new information and ask that the matter be reconsidered. If that is wrong, will the right hon. Gentleman please tell me?

I have suffered the systematic humiliation of being excluded from the government of the part of the country to which I belong because I thought that price was worth paying to be a British citizen. I will not suffer this humiliation. I will not come along here as a self-seeking time server and pretend that I am a Member of Parliament when I am not. That is what the people of Northern Ireland will think I am if I do.

I said at the start that I wished that the House had been honest with me. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) said that most hon. Members could not understand the people of Northern Ireland because somehow we are different, but he could not explain what that difference was. He described how the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic and the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland could relate to each other because they both respected each other's position. I can relate to the leader of the SDLP without any problem because I respect his position and he respects mine. If I had known that this was the proposition that would be put to me; if I had realised that direct rule, which has been so offensive, would be made this offensive; if I had realised that the government of the Province to which I belong would be put to a large extent into the hands of a foreign Government, I would have viewed my political relationships in Northern Ireland very differently.

The people of Northern Ireland whom I represent would prefer to be governed by a Catholic nationalist in Northern Ireland than a Minister from the Irish Republic who lives in Cork and who did not know where Northern Ireland was until five years ago. If I had known that those were the terms for my continued membership of the House of Commons, I would have considered other options. I did not consider other options because my first option was simply to be an ordinary British citizen. But, as the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) has confirmed, I cannot consider that now. I am not prepared to consider a sharing of power or the governing of Northern Ireland with the SDLP with the threat that every time they do not get their way they will run down to their nursemaid in Dublin to take it up with the Secretary of State in the Anglo-Irish conference.

That is the position in which the unionists are being put. They are being told that they will not be citizens of the nation to which they belong on the basis that they want but that they will be governed within the framework of an Anglo-Irish conference and that if, within that framework, they want devolution it will be on the basis that they virtually concede equality of power to their political opponents in Northern Ireland and, at the same time, give the Irish Government a direct influence on every other aspect of life in Northern Ireland. That is too high a price for me to pay.

I say in all sincerity, and I mean it, that I will never accept this agreement as the means whereby I will be governed in Northern Ireland. Tens and tens and tens of thousands of people in Northern Ireland share that view. If that is construed as me flying in the face of the sovereignty of this Parliament, so be it. I have heard the threats over the past two days. Let us have a referendum in the United Kingdom and let Northern Ireland accept the result. I will accept the judgment. If the people of the United Kingdom say to me that they no longer want me, it will simply be echoing what the Government are saying anyway and they will have to live with the consequences of that decision. That referendum cannot deliver me against my will into an Irish Republic. I will not go to the Irish Republic and what might flow from whatever the developments might be would be something with which eveybody in the United Kingdom would have to live. I am not scared of a referendum. I am prepared to live with its consequences.

I have heard variations on the sponger theme. It is said that we are given £1·5 billion each year and we had better be careful or it will be taken from us. As I said last night, I can accept money from the richer parts of the United Kingdom being given to Northern Ireland if it is the decision of the Parliament of the United Kingdom to redistribute the United Kingdom's wealth to the poorer parts. However, I cannot accept, and I do not want, United Kingdom charity. I do not want money to be offered to me to buy my acquiescence. That is the view of the majority of the people in Northern Ireland. Do not threaten me with a referendum or with turning off the financial tap. We are proud people. When we say what we mean, we mean what we say. I wish that that standard could be adopted by all right hon. and hon. Members.

6.10 pm

Sir Humphrey Atkins (Spelthorne): The House has just listened to two very powerful speeches by two Members of Parliament from Northern Ireland — the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) and the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). All right hon. and hon. Members fully understand those speeches. The hon. Member for Upper Bann has spent far more of his time than anybody ought to have to spend comforting the relatives of people killed by violence in the last 10 years. The hon. Member for Antrim, North and other Northern Ireland representatives have had to do the

same. No right hon. or hon. Member can wonder at the passion with which they speak about the future of the Province in which they live.

I am not entirely sure that the interpretation that the hon. Member for Upper Bann places upon some of the words in the agreement stand up to close examination. I shall return to that in a moment. The hon. Gentleman is very selective about what he believes. It appears that both he and the leader of the Democratic Unionist party believe what is said by Ministers of the Government of the Irish Republic when they are quoted in newspapers, but that they do not believe those Ministers when words are incorporated in an agreement that they sign. Article 2 refers to no derogation from sovereignty. The hon. Member for Antrim, North does not believe those words. Article 9 refers to security and responsibility for police operations. The hon. Gentleman does not believe that, either. The selectivity with which he believes and does not believe is, to put it no higher, difficult to understand.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I was trying to point out the contradictions. I believe none of them. Many lies are being told in Dublin and many falsehoods are being told in other places. I do not look at any right hon. or hon. Member when I say this, or I should incur your wrath, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, the contradictions lead us to ask ourselves who we can believe. We believe ourselves and our own interpretation.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: No doubt I misunderstood the hon. Gentleman, and I shall study what he said in *Hansard*. My firm impression, although I may have have been wrong, is that he was supporting his case by quoting press reports of what Irish Ministers had said and purporting to believe them.

My impression is that most people, with the exception of the Unionist parties, are pleased with the agreement. I am one of them. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach are to be congratulated upon achieving this agreement. It has always seemed to me to be a tragedy that the Prime Ministers of two sovereign, independent countries — the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland—should not be on good terms. The Republic of Ireland is the only country with which we share a land frontier. It is the nearest country to us in every way. For the two Prime Ministers not to be on good terms with each other and not to spend a proportion of their time trying to improve the relations between our two countries has always seemed to me to be a pity. We heard earlier in the debate how seldom that had happened. This is one of the great achievements of the agreement, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her Ministers upon it.

Anxiety has been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, not just members of the Unionist parties, about the fact that the agreement gives a foreign country a say in what goes on in part of the United Kingdom. I understand that anxiety completely. The Republic of Ireland is a foreign country. Although it will be unable to do anything, the Republic will have a say. Certain right hon. and hon. Members believe that it would be wrong to give a foreign country even a say in what happens in Northern Ireland, just as it would be wrong if this happened in Surrey, part of which county I represent.

Mr. Stanbrook: Hear, hear.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: My hon. Friend says, "Hear, hear." I take that point absolutely. It has been mentioned already in this debate that Northern Ireland is marginally different from Surrey. Most of the differences are historical. When I first took up my duties as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in 1979, I was subjected to a long lecture by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) about Irish history. We had to agree eventually that we could not alter it, but history has undoubtedly had an effect upon the attitudes and the behaviour of people in Northern Ireland. That makes the province different from other parts of the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Foyle referred to a council. I shall give another example.

When I was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the Unionist-controlled Lisburn borough council came to the conclusion that a development of flats in its area — it was not being developed by the council but, as happens in Northern Ireland, by the Housing Executive—would be occupied by displaced people from west Belfast and that most of them were Catholics. It was quite right. That is exactly what happened in this development on the edge of the council's borough. The council solemnly sat down and passed a resolution that, when the flats were occupied, it would refuse to collect the occupants' refuse.

That problem was eventually solved, but with some difficulty. It illustrates one of the ways in which Northern Ireland is different from the rest of the United Kingdom. I do not say that any right hon. or hon. Member of either the Official Unionist party or the Democratic Unionist party would support that kind of action. I am sure that they would deplore it. But it happened. I cannot believe that it would happen in most of the other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: It happened in Liverpool.

Sir Humphrey Atkins: Yes, and look at the fuss that that caused. That is why I am unable to agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), to whose speech yesterday I listened with great interest and whose actions I very much respect, that regional councils are the way forward. He did not explain — nor did any other right hon. or hon. Member—how the power to be given to regional councils should be exercised.

Successive Secretaries of State and successive Governments have studied how best power and responsibility can be exercised in Northern Ireland. A few minutes ago my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) referred to the Sunningdale agreement. I chaired a conference, without success, which examined whether a way forward could be devised. My right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) established the Assembly which might have led, as it might still lead, to power. That must happen. Disagreement will not achieve it. Disagreement solves no problems.

It is essential that sooner or later the power of government in Northern Ireland should be exercised in Northern Ireland, not in this House by Ministers on the Treasury Bench. The future of Northern Ireland and how it is run must eventually be in the hands of elected representatives in Northern Ireland. They are mostly unionists, and they will undoubtedly continue to be unionists for a very long time. Nobody on this side of the Irish sea can decide these matters.

There have been about eight Secretaries of State since Stormont was suspended. They represented constituencies

[Sir Humphrey Atkins]

in Cumbria, Cambridgeshire, Yorkshire, Surrey, east Anglia, Oxfordshire and, now, the west country. None was able to devise a system under which the power that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State now exercises could be exercised in Northern Ireland, yet that is what we all wanted to do. Only the representatives of the people of Northern Ireland can do it.

The unionists feel that they were not consulted about the agreement. They feel let down and betrayed. We have heard that from them, and I have no doubt that we shall hear it again. I wholly understand those feelings, but I also understand that, as the unionists represent the majority in Northern Ireland, it is they and they alone in the future who can determine Northern Ireland's destiny. I beg them to consider carefully not just what they will do next month or in January or February, when many of them will return here if they have the elections that they plan, but what they will do next year, the year after and the year after that. What matters is how that country will be run to the benefit of everyone who lives there.

The unionist Members know what a wonderful part of the United Kingdom Northern Ireland is because they live there. They were born there. They represent it. I had the privilege of living there for two and a half years and I came quickly to realise what a marvellous part of the United Kingdom it is and what a tragedy it is that it is so beset by difficulties.

I beg all Ulster Members, in particular the unionist Members, to think carefully about what they will do in the future. I am sorry that we did not hear much about the future from the hon. Members for Antrim, North and for Upper Bann. Each spoke for more half an hour, but they did not tell us how they saw the future developing. No doubt they know. I hope that they do, because it is they who have the future of their Province in their hands.

6.22 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): I recall a television interview given by the right hon. Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins) in his early days in office as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that I witnessed in the House of Commons television room. He referred to "these IRA chappies." My heart sank. I knew that he was made to measure for the IRA. I shall argue later that he bears a heavy responsibility for the rise of Sinn Fein. The Anglo-Irish debate has already brought out sharply conflicting positions. It has also served to emphasise the delicate balance that the Dublin and London Governments are trying to strike.

We have heard from the Ulster Unionists that any role for the Dublin Government represents the start of the slippery road towards Irish unity. Yesterday, the Prime Minister patiently explained that the Anglo-Irish agreement offered them reassurances that they had long been demanding.

Prime Minister Garret FitzGerald insists that the Irish Government's immediate interest is to elevate the position of the nationalist community within Northern Ireland to a level that will overcome its alienation and see it cease to support the IRA. London and Dublin are anxious not to trigger counter-alienation on the part of the unionist community. That is one further delicate balance that they are trying to strike.

The British Government divided Ireland 65 years ago and kept the six counties in the United Kingdom. Britain and Ireland have paid in blood and in billions of pounds for that cowardice ever since.

Recent polls in Britain show that only 15 per cent. of the people are happy with that state of affairs. More than half favour British troop withdrawal, and three quarters are against any part of Ireland remaining within the United Kingdom.

Has not the time arrived to consider a change? Once more, the leaders of Ulster's Protestant community have reacted to a British attempt to bring peace to their Province by whipping their followers into self-righteous indignation. In the words of *The Economist* last week:

"Protestants should stop complaining when Britons are brave on their behalf . . . yet the Protestant majority regards loyalism as implying the right to Britain's loyalty—the right to expect mainland Britain to send young men to die in mean streets, made meaner by Protestant bigotry."

Protestant Ulster has refused to share power with the Catholic minority. It has refused not just at the ballot box but by gerrymandering, corruption, violence, terrorism and, most notably, in 1974, by industrial disruption. Despite this, I believe that there are some Tory Members who will go into the Lobby with the Unionist Members tonight.

As Ulster will not tolerate power sharing locally, British Ministers are correct to try power sharing nationally on Ulster's behalf. Just as Britain has taken the easy option of bailing out Ulster politics with direct rule, so it has taken the easy option of bailing out the Ulster economy with British money. Neither has worked. That is why we have also heard reservations expressed about the agreement from some of my hon. Friends. They, like me, find that the agreement represents a step—a movement — and that, of course, is seductive, but they ask whether the step is purposeful enough or whether it will merely legitimise and harden the border.

The agreement will almost certainly lead the Dublin Government into positions where they find themselves assuming responsibility for actions without any power. London is undoubtedly bent on the extraordinary quest of securing Dublin's assistance to help the British Government rule a part of Ireland more effectively and make it more amenable to the British Government's authority.

Garret FitzGerald justifies that on the ground of relieving the continuing nightmare of Northern Ireland nationalists — that their unity aspirations must take second place in the short term to provide a stable, peaceful society for them. In convincing the nationalists that their interests are being adequately represented and thus wean them from the IRA, Garret FitzGerald faces problems perhaps more formidable than the Prime Minister's. If the IRA were merely a criminal conspiracy, it would have been wiped out long ago. But the success of Sinn Fein at the polls has forced the British to do something for the constitutional nationalists represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume).

Sinn Fein's political success originated with a series of hunger strikes to the death in which strikers from the Gaelic and Catholic tradition held out even against the Pope's wishes. It is the martyrdom of the H-block hunger strikers which is responsible for the agreement that we are now debating. There was a supine Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at the time, and the Prime Minister

refused to show the compassion, humanity or even the slightest political flexibility that could have headed off the crisis that ended with the death of an elected Member of this House. She is learning.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Is it not right that those in the H-blocks at that time had been convicted of murder and conspiracy to murder?

Mr. Duffy: They had been convicted, but I said that a little political nous, a little awareness of Irish history and of their psyche and a little political flexibility in the previous December could have headed off the May crisis. It could also have prevented the death of a Member of this House.

However, the Prime Minister is changing. She is learning. But will a combination of Garret FitzGerald and the right hon. Lady be sufficient to overcome, in the eyes of a burgeoning younger generation to which the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) referred yesterday — South as well as North — the appeal of the growing political effectiveness, as well as the determination, of Sinn Fein? If not, will they be tempted to proscribe it? That would be a step backwards.

I hope that the Government will work unremittingly to wean supporters of Sinn Fein from the bullet to the ballot. But that will mean — even to bring the degree of normality to Northern Ireland that is taken for granted in Britain—the conference and its secretariat working hard on many difficult problems. That includes, for example, the widespread belief among nationalists that the UDR is an armed wing of the unionists intent on inflicting humiliation and reminding them who is boss. Only those bearing certain names, some of which are borne by hon. Members of this House, who have been stopped on country lanes late at night in the north of Ireland by members of the UDR know just what humiliation means.

The problems include also the shoot-to-kill policy in Ulster; the lies, notably in the Constable Robinson case, that have been told to order in Ulster courts; the lack of juries; the hatred of the prison system; the lack of trust in the RUC; provocative Orange marches in predominantly Catholic areas, while confining Republican marches to their own districts; the Flag and Emblems Act, which bans display of the Irish tricolour while allowing the Union Jack to be flown regardless of potential provocation; strip searches of women prisoners; and the scandal of boy prisoners detained at the Secretary of State's pleasure; and the reneging by state-owned Short Brothers in Belfast on its Catholic jobs pledge.

The list of injustices and deeply felt grievances does not end there. If the agreement is to mark a new phase of cordiality in the relationship between Britain and Ireland —the speech of the Foreign Secretary in Birkenhead last Saturday, in which he praised the Irish Republic as a "mature democracy" was an encouraging departure—the feelings of the considerable Irish community in Britain will have to be taken into account and not customarily insulted, as they were yesterday in the House by the right hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Mr. Amery).

Special attention will have to be given to the cases of the Maguire family and the Birmingham six, who seem more than anything to have been victims of the bad relationship which traditionally existed between our two countries until now.

There is also the question of Irish prisoners in Britain and their treatment. Too many cases of ill treatment are reported to my hon. Friends and me to leave any doubt that there are genuine grounds for complaint. Consideration should be given to their transfer to prisons in Ireland.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone) *rose*——

Mr. Duffy: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if, because of time, I do not give way to him.

There is no escape from the dilemma that either the Republic is to have some real say on behalf of the nationalist minority or there is no basis on which the Republic can redirect the allegiance of the minority to the politics of consent and away from the revolutionary goals of the IRA and the INLA. The basic question is simply whether the most that Britain is prepared to offer can be made to equal the least that Ireland needs to fulfil its part in the agreement.

There is still a danger that the two Prime Ministers will discover that they have been talking about different things — he about Catholic alienation, she merely about reinforcing the Union and intensifying the fight against the IRA. Even if it proved to be the latter and the emphasis was on security, I hope the House will recognise that that could be solved only in tandem with political movement.

Beyond that, it is a fact beyond dispute that a majority of the people of Ireland retain the aspiration for a united Ireland. Does any hon. Member really believe that the agreement can succeed unless it provides for a continuing glimpse of that natural and perfectly legitimate aspiration?

6.35 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The Irish question, which has so pervaded British and Irish politics for centuries, has become the Irish riddle. Often presented in theoretical constitutional terms, the issue has, at its centre of gravity, become primarily practical and political—an attempt, for the right reason, to protect minorities from administrative, economic and religious discrimination and, to ensure the preservation of peace, order and good government of the people in the United Kingdom and Ireland as a whole. There are many similarities with Mr. Speaker's protection of minorities in the House.

The agreement is a unique and important step in solving the riddle and in the continuation of those democratic objectives. It is based on a recognition of the diversity of the traditions in both parts of the community in Northern Ireland and is designed to redress the inequalities that have permeated the politics of the Province.

Without disturbing United Kingdom jurisdiction over Northern Ireland—which remains, despite the remarks of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker), absolute under section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 and was solemnly acknowledged for the first time by the Irish Government and Parliament last week—the two Governments have taken the historic step of coming together in mutual and reciprocal determination and political co-operation, within the context of the European Community, to protect the people of northern and southern Ireland as a whole from the buliet and the bomb.

I appeal to all those involved to maintain an atmosphere of calm, to avoid the language of hatred and mistrust and to remember that people and children mean more than pieces of paper or political power. I urge the continuation of meaningful dialogue, particularly with the Ulster Unionists.

[Mr. William Cash]

Our mutual histories are littered with attempts to solve this problem. I hope that in due course we may be able to give further political expression to the agreement by eradicating and reconciling any residual theoretical constitutional problems which bedevil the situation and which may yet remain.

I have in mind the complications in our respective statute books of Poyning's Law of 1495, the Act of Union 1800, the view in Ryan's case, the view in Moore's case, articles 1 and 2 of the Irish Constitution and inconsistencies in the statutory provisions enacted in both countries in the 1920s and 1930s. The agreement ensures mutual acceptance of the validity of the 1973 Act. I urge the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) to bear that in mind and to restate his position on the guarantee under section 1.

The two Governments and Parliament have come together on a basis of consent by their electorates as a whole to make a positive agreement and to find a new way forward. The historic and, by their standards, sizeable vote in the Dail last week was a significant step in that direction, and I remind the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) that that included the defeat of Charles Haughey's amendment invoking articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution of Ireland. Enough time has passed to enable further progress to be made.

Constitutional theologians and religious bigots may seek to exploit the obvious difficulties that we face. Nevertheless, the agreement is a testament to the real statesmanship of the Prime Ministers of this country and of the Republic of Ireland and to constitutional ecumenism. It is a real opportunity for the people of Ireland, both north and south of the border, to achieve peace and stability.

Some people have claimed that the agreement will destabilise the position in Northern Ireland. That is not so —it has been destabilised for centuries by the lack of goodwill in seeking reconciliation from within, first in the days of the Protestant ascendancy and latterly since 1920 in Northern Ireland itself.

The agreement follows in the tradition of actions—so far as the times in which they were living allowed—by Charles James Fox, William Pitt, Canning, Gratton, Plunket, Peel, Wellington, O'Connell, Gladstone and Lloyd George, in taking bold and visionary steps to achieve reconciliation and harmony for the individual people of Ireland, both north and south of the border.

I ask the leaders of Ulster to stay their hand, to pause and to be bold, generous and imaginative—as they are truly able to be—in generating trust and goodwill rather than discord and unrest. Do they seek constitutional means as a method of protection or to exhaust remedies as a precursor to further action?

John Morley aptly described the problem in his summary of the Home Rule Bill 1886, when he said:

> "One of the cardinal difficulties of all free government is to make it hard for majorities to act unjustly to minorities. You cannot make this injustice impossible but you may set up obstacles."

I have been asked what constitutional precedent there is for the agreement. There is no need to seek precedent, other than all the course of precedents for seeking peace, order and good government. That is the good and right reason for establishing the rule, and justifies the agreement in terms of convention. In that respect, the same applies to the United Kingdom and to the Irish Republic.

How better could it be put than in the words of the preamble to the agreement:

> "Recognising the major interest of both their countries and, above all, of the people of Northern Ireland in diminishing the divisions there and achieving lasting peace and stability"?

In the 19th century the Irish question turned upon attempts by the United Kingdom Executive to devolve degrees of self-government to Ireland while protecting the Protestant minority. They failed. Only after the legislation of the 1920s and 1930s was there any real opportunity for both Governments to solve it.

By fully recognising the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, the Irish Government and the Dail have made a quantum leap forward. We in this Parliament will do likewise by approving tonight our Government's participation in the agreement.

A great problem remains—it is the acceptance of the agreement by the people of this United Kingdom who live in Northern Ireland. As has been made clear frequently in the debate, the agreement entails no loss of British or Irish Sovereignty, no sellout and no change in the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. Those who have taken the trouble to study the document and have some knowledge of Irish history know very well that that is so. Indeed, our High Court during the past few days has now ruled twice that that is the case.

However, we know that an agreement of such importance is fragile, even when buttressed by the vast number of votes to be cast in its favour at the end of the debate. Those votes will be the votes of the United Kingdom Parliament as a whole, speaking clearly to the people of that electorate as a whole.

But what of the elected representatives of Northern Ireland? What of their responsibility to their constituents, their electorate and this Parliament? Does loyalty to a party transcend loyalty to a constituency? The responsibility of the one cannot be divorced from the other — loyalist to whom and unionist of what, and upon what basis? Those are the questions that I ask them carefully and calmly to consider. That is what I meant when, in my opening remarks, I referred to the Ulster riddle. Who would be Lundy now if the gates of prejudice and intolerance, which, under this agreement, could be closed against terrorism and anarchy, were forcibly kept open?

By any reasonable assessment, the leaders of Northern Ireland know in their hearts that the history of the Province since the 1920s has been one of denial of civil and other rights to the Catholic minority. That cannot continue. The alienation is pushing that electorate further into the arms of Sinn Fein. I ask the leaders in Northern Ireland, when they accuse the Government in their mistrust, to ask themselves how that mistrust was created decades ago, first engendered in the 1920s and beyond, and whether we should not now all take note of the attempts at Geneva to solve the apparently insoluble mistrust that exists between Russia and America.

What advantage is there to the people of Ulster—the ordinary people who live and work there — to lose credibility with the remainder of the United Kingdom, which has loyally stood by them for centuries and protected them with their sovereignty, soldiers and subsidies for so long?

Constitutional theologians may deprecate and desecrate the agreement, but once endorsed by a massive majority in this United Kingdom Parliament, by its Members as a whole, there is no turning back. Things will never be the same again if Ulster votes against this pact in the by-elections that have been threatened. It is precisely for the reason that the agreement will have the backing of the United Kingdom Parliament as a whole, that the by-elections are potentially so dangerous to the Union. I appeal to the men of Ulster to think carefully in the time ahead about where all this will lead, and about whether they would be resigning for the right reasons. Far from bolstering confidence, it will induce greater chaos and deepen the profound sense of insecurity that has dominated Ulster politics for the past 60 years.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): I have followed my hon. Friend's remarks with great care. He sounds like a most encouraging idealist. Does he believe that his faith will be translated into success, and if not, what is his view?

Mr. Cash: I believe that if the threat of the by-elections is realised, we face great insecurity——

Mr. Gorst: I asked about the agreement.

Mr. Cash: I believe that the agreement supports a real possibility for peace and stability in Northern Ireland.

Surely it would be counter-productive to renounce by resignation the protection inherent for the people of Ulster, of whatever political or religious persuasion, by virtue of membership of this House. To maintain the authority of Parliament, it is necessary to maintain unity, which is the first duty of every representative of the people. To do otherwise would be to mislead the electorate of Northern Ireland by drawing it away from Westminster on a tidal wave of emotion and spurious constitutional doctrine.

There is no such thing as partial consent to our Government by a portion of the United Kingdom, as Gladstone so clearly pointed out in the debate on home rule 100 years ago. Once the votes and the die are cast in those by-elections, there will be no retrieving the position thus created. To repudiate the agreement in Northern Ireland does not and cannot invalidate it—it merely creates a constitutional vacuum and plays into the hands of the men of violence.

The agreement itself, and now the Dail, acknowledge that the present wish of a majority of the people in Northern Ireland is for no change in the status of Northern Ireland. A referendum would add nothing to that, and could not solve the central problem of Ulster. The issue in a referendum, whether in Northern Ireland alone or in the United Kingdom as a whole, would be lost in a welter of personalities, parties and emotions. The prospects for such a referendum would be totally destroyed by the consequences of the proposed by-elections. The difference in the position of Northern Ireland compared with Scotland and Wales, is clearly set out in section 1 of the 1973 Act. The mechanism on the central issue is already there.

Why, then, do the Ulster Unionist and Democratic Unionist Members of Parliament wish to repudiate the agreement? At bottom, underneath the rhetoric, it appears to me that there is a message — no progress, no toleration, no protection for the minority. The irony is immense, for only by endorsing the agreement and by the exercise of responsible consent, can the practical protection of the people of Northern Ireland as a minority within the United Kingdom be sustained against terrorism.

It is part of the riddle to which I have referred that Carson himself wanted the protection to be vested here in Westminster, where it remains under the 1973 Act. That the agreement provides. There is no question of any change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland except by the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, and the agreement concedes that such consent is not there. Their protection lies in statute conferred by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, which it is in the interest of Ulster Members to support.

To repudiate the agreement in by-elections would be to repudiate the authority of the Government, and of the Parliament of the United Kingdom by induced and incited consent. To a significant degree, it would undermine the consent of the electorate of the United Kingdom as a whole to the status of Northern Ireland, as set out in the 1973 Act. Can people not see the dangers of that? Their leaders clearly can, and so must be held accountable for the consequences.

Approval or disapproval will lie in the votes of the good people of Ulster, but once the decision is taken it will become an issue with far-reaching and unpredictable consequences. For decades there has been no serious or effective attempt to integrate the minority tradition into the institutional, administrative, economic, social or community affairs of Northern Ireland. That is at the practical root of the problem. If the leadership in Northern Ireland, believing that it is doing the right thing, chooses now, in by-elections, to take the electorate down the path of despair, it will have frustrated every attempt since 1920 to make progress.

In those circumstances, I appeal to the electorate to repudiate in the proposed by-elections not the agreement, the Government, their fellow Ulstermen who represent 40 per cent. of the population, their parliament or their friends in the United Kingdom and southern Ireland, but those of their Ulster leaders who, if they were to resign, would resign the future of Northern Ireland, and risk putting their electorate truly beyond the pale of the United Kingdom.

If those leaders, in a sterile pretence at protecting the people whom they represent, destroy the basis and credibility of the protection which has been afforded to them for centuries by the United Kingdom, their justification for returning as Members of Parliament will be undermined. If there are elections, the decision will lie with the people of Ulster. I remind those hon. Members who are about to resign, and who will face the people of Ulster with that decision of Becket's words in Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral"—

> "Now is my way clear, now is my meaning plain.
> Temptation shall not come in this kind again.
> For I now know that it is the greatest treason.
> To do the right thing for the wrong reason."

6.52 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): It is clear that Northern Ireland is different and has been different from the rest of the United Kingdom since its foundation and since it was made separate from the rest of Ireland because the minority of the people of the north of Ireland objected to the creation of that mini-state.

I have visited Northern Ireland several times. I was a member of the Kilbrandon committee which looked into the results of the New Ireland Forum, and at least some of our conclusions were not far different from the contents of the agreement. On one of my visits, I was shown around

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

Belfast by a woman who I felt sure was a very hard-line supporter of the Democratic Unionist party. At the beginning of the day, I asked her what her attitude was to the border, and she more or less said that she would fight to retain the six counties' separation from the rest of Ireland. The hunger strikes were on, and there was tension in the air. Indeed, a hunger striker's funeral was taking place in the Falls road.

Later that day we were looking at a particularly desolate part of Belfast and I asked her whether she had ever been to Dublin. She said that she had, so I asked her what she thought of it. She said that Dublin was a fine place. I asked, "Are you really saying that coming under Dublin would be worse than all this?" I did not talk about Dublin having a consultative status, but referred merely to "coming under Dublin". She replied, "Put that way, I suppose we could work under Dublin." *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members may laugh, but that little anecdote contains hope for Northern Ireland. It shows that it is possible for those who ostensibly vote for unionist politicians to be persuaded to see a different and more peaceful future for their land.

Those who have visited Northern Ireland will have been overwhelmed by the tragedy going on there. It is a reflection of that that when the Leader of the DUP spoke, he did not say anything throughout his lengthy speech about the future of Northern Ireland. He did not offer anything other than a continuation of present events. It was a speech of no hope and of despair. His speech must be contrasted with that made by the leader of the SDLP. The speech made by that hon. Member showed that he was willing to take risks, and that the SDLP had some vision about the future of Northern Ireland and was willing to take risks for the sake of peace in that land.

I can only despair of unionist leaders who say that nothing should be changed and who accept that the violence will continue. They ask merely for more security, and have nothing else to offer the people of the six counties or the people of the whole of Ireland. That is too depressing an assessment for the House to accept. Indeed, it is too depressing to be acceptable to the people of this country.

We must say no to such attitudes, because there must be a different, better and more peaceful way forward. That means some recognition of the responsibilities of leadership on the part of unionist politicians. They must say that they will consider any change to see whether there is anything of benefit there to all the people of the six counties. Sadly, I see no sign of that vision or of the sort of leadership that the Protestant population of the six counties is entitled to expect of them. I see no more than a continuation of the status quo.

It is easy to say that a new suggestion has faults. I also accept that the agreement is flawed. It is not the most wonderful thing imaginable, but at least it offers a way forward. If we always pick to pieces any suggestion made for the future of Northern Ireland, violence will continue. Some people may think that the level of violence is acceptable, but I do not think so. Nevertheless, that violence will continue and our children will end up having the same discussions. That is no way forward.

In this modest agreement, we have an opportunity. Of course the agreement is faulty. Some hon. Members have said that it will help to reduce the level of violence, but in the short term it may not do so, because the men of violence may well see it as a threat and try to undermine it by escalating the violence. But if the agreement is backed by the House, it can form a message to the people of Northern Ireland. In that way, those who have gone along slightly with the men of violence may say that they will not do so any more, thus isolating the terrorists.

I am certain that the leaders of Sinn Fein see the agreement as a threat to the support that they have received from some in the community. I am sure that they are anxious about it, because it will undermine their support. It will not stop the hard-liners committing acts of violence. Nobody expects it to do so. But the agreement's success will be judged by whether the majority of those from the six counties say that they have had enough of violence and will follow this different approach.

I cannot understand why the unionists are so passionately opposed to the agreement. Throughout most of yesterday and today, I listened to their speeches. They cannot object because of the words in the agreement. We are talking about what the agreement signifies and where it goes in the long term.

Perhaps unionist leaders see the agreement as the first step to a united Ireland. I shall deal with that later because I believe in a united Ireland. I think that the traditional unionist politicians fear that the agreement will slowly change attitudes and perceptions in the six counties. It will make the ordinary unionist people who traditionally have regarded Dublin and the Republic as the enemy, believe that it will not be all that bad to give the Republic some advisory say. Because that will make people realise that the Republic is not the enemy of the unionist population in the north, the unionists will be less likely to follow their hard-line leaders. That is a threat to the leaders of the two unionist parties if they believe that they can do nothing about it and that that is the only option.

For that reason, I welcome the agreement. If it makes the people in the six counties adopt a different attitude to the Republic, to co-operating with Dublin and to achieving agreement covering the whole of Ireland—whether on security, the justice system, economic or social policies —so much the better.

For long I have believed in a united Ireland. I hope that the agreement will enable a Labour Government committed to a united Ireland to make progress. That is for the future. That is for the day when there is a different Government. In the meantime we have the reality of a debate about an agreement and the reaction in Northern Ireland and the whole of Ireland to our decision this evening.

I am puzzled about how all the unionists plan to go for by-elections. I think that the Official Unionists have been bullied by the Democratic Unionists for reasons that I do not fully understand. It seems a short-sighted policy. If they are all returned to the seats which they now hold, so what? What will be different? Nothing will have changed and they will have proved nothing. If any of them lose their seats, that will be their problem. Some unionists said that they were making their last speeches in the House. They talk not of the last speeches before the by-elections but of their last speeches ever. I wonder whether that means that they will not resume their seats even if they win their by-elections.

Whatever the arguments by the population forecasters, it is inescapable that at some time in the not-too-distant future the Northern Ireland population will have changed

so that there is a Catholic majority in the six counties. The best forecast is that that will happen in 30 years. It may be sooner, or a little later. We have heard that even then a 51 per cent. majority in favour of joining the Republic will not be sufficient for unionist politicians. At what point will they accept that the majority in Northern Ireland want to join a united Ireland?

The unionists must face the consequences of their arguments. There is an inevitability about the population changes and about the process of moving towards a united Ireland. We are witnessing one of a number of last-ditch defences.

When something is inevitable, leadership's task is to ease the transition in a way which is peaceful, protects the interests of the community and ensures stability. Without that, conflict and tension will continue.

The parliamentary tier suggestion is helpful because it would enable closer relationships to be developed between the House of Commons and the Dail. That relationship would be better and be in the interests of all the people of Ireland. I hope that the House will move in that direction.

I do not think that the agreement is the most wonderful thing of all time. It is modest, but it is a step forward in the interests of the peace and well being of the Northern Ireland people and therefore of the people of the whole of Ireland. I hope that the House will give the agreement its overwhelming support.

7.5 pm

Sir Frederic Bennett (Torbay): My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) sought to lecture Ulster Unionists on their duties. I believe them all to be capable of making up their minds about where their duties and obligations lie. If they decide that their duties and obligations require them to resign and fight elections it is not up to us to query their motives or to seek to persuade them not to take that action. That would be slightly presumptous.

There is anyhow no need for the unionists to take such action to persuade us, from whatever side, of the depth of passion and emotion and sense of conviction that they have expressed on behalf of the majority of their constituents. It is not necessary for them to take any other step to be convincing.

An advantage of taking part in the second day of a debate is that one has been able to listen and to learn. I listened to almost all the debate yesterday and to all of it today. I have come to the conclusion that we have to face the fact that Unionist Members represent their constituents' conviction—however much we may deplore or question it — that they are now set on the road to absorption under an Irish Government in Dublin.

The speech by the Leader of the Opposition yesterday revealed at the start a rare element of statesmanship; but I regretted that towards the end of his speech he raised the spectre of the Government's economic policies. He said the killings were partly attributable to those policies. That was deplorable and inaccurate because the figures show that casualties and killings were higher when the Labour Government were in office. On a matter of fact, he was talking nonsense.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that most of the violence in our inner cities is caused by mass unemployment and deprivation?

Sir Frederic Bennett: Much of the trouble in the inner cities is not the result of this Government's policies but of those adopted by the previous Labour Government. But those policies no more contributed to the killings during the last 15 years in Ulster than our policies did.

Some comments made yesterday and reiterated today have put hon. Members like myself in difficulty. I refer to the opinion expressed by Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) who wound up last night's debate for the Opposition, that the agreement was a welcome step on the way to a united Ireland. When I support the Government in the Lobby tonight, it will not be because I regard the agreement as a step on the way to a united Ireland, but because I believe, rightly or wrongly, that it is a legislative, constitutional and practical step to cement our obligation permanently to ensure the self-determination rights of the majority in Ulster. I do not agree that this is the first step towards betraying the majority in Ulster. There are good reasons for believing that at a critical time we are cementing an obligation through an international treaty to ensure that the majority in Ulster will never have the right of self-determination about their future taken from them by any British or other Government.

We have talked a great deal about the advantages and disadvantages of the agreement, but there is one disadvantage and one advantage that we have not mentioned. The agreement provides the best possibility ever put before us to gain some ground. Some hon. Members have referred to the fact that at present there is a growing feeling — I am not talking about threats of plebiscites of the British public — in Scotland, Wales and England that we are trying to attain the impossible by seeking to reconcile the two communities in the North. We all know that, and we do not need polls to tell us that.

People are getting tired of trying to achieve something which appears to be unattainable. Therefore, we have a duty to try yet another initiative to bring about a change that is acceptable to the electorate of Great Britain and Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. The advantages in the new agreement at least justify us giving it a fair chance.

I dislike the second article, about a structured consultative role, as much as anyone, but I am aware from the intolerable arguments that I have had during the past 18 months with my Irish counterparts at Strasbourg that no agreement is possible on any subject or aspect of our relations that does not give some sort of consultative role to the Irish Republic regarding the minority. We must face the fact that Garret FitzGerald would never have got his agreement through the Dail last week without that article.

When, as a supporter of the Government, one deals with the arguments, it is odd that on the one hand there is Mr. Haughey and his men who say that Garret FitzGerald has betrayed the Irish public by giving away too much, and on the other, our Ulster Unionist friends and others who say that the British Government have given away too much.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Why is it that no one understands that when Mr. Haughey said that he was simply playing party politics for his own benefit?

Sir Frederic Bennett: I would not have given way if I had known that I was to be asked to comment on that. It is difficult enough to understand the Irish and their

[Sir Frederic Bennett]

conduct, but to understand the motivation of Irish politicians is a task beyond my powers. I wish to terminate my remarks as briefly as possible.

Reverend Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Good.

Sir Frederic Bennett: That sort of remark does not help.

The pre-agreement position of all the Irish parties that signed the New Ireland Forum report—that is, the three parties in the South and the SDLP in the North—is contained in large paragraphs within a booklet. I shall quote only a sentence from each of the proposals which, until Dr. FitzGerald put forward the agreement last week, represented the official position of his Government.

The first was a proposal for a unitary state. The proposal states:

"A unitary state would embrace the island of Ireland governed as a single unit under one Government and one Parliament elected by all the people of the island."

Whatever else one may think, that has been entirely renounced through Dr. FitzGerald's adherence to the agreement.

The second proposition put to the New Ireland Forum was of a federal or confederal state. The proposal states:

"A two state federal/confederal Ireland based on the existing identities, North and South, would reflect the political and administrative realities of the past 60 years and would entrench a measure of autonomy for both parts of Ireland within an all-Ireland framework."

That is far beyond what we are proposing tonight, and represents a significant surrender of the Irish Government's previous position.

The third suggestion, which is endorsed by the other parties to the New Ireland Forum, all of which but one have now abandoned their claims under the Forum, is a joint authority. The proposal states:

"Under joint authority, the London and Dublin Governments would have equal responsibility for all aspects of the Government of Northern Ireland."

The British Government have utterly rejected those Forum suggestions. Some Opposition Members suggested that they were worth following up, but all the suggestions go far beyond what we are being asked to approve tonight.

It would be wrong for anyone to imagine that those who go into the Aye Lobby tonight are composed of two simple factions—those who want to get rid of the Irish problem altogether, and those who would like a united Ireland or who hold other extremist points of view. The view of the majority of Conservative Members will be that, although the agreement may fail to achieve its objectives, as other initiatives have done, it is worth giving a chance to the best initiative that we have had for a long time, which seeks to secure in perpetuity the right of the majority of the inhabitants of Ulster to decide their own future within the United Kingdom.

7.18 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): Some hon. Members will share with me a sense of conviction that the aid from Torbay tonight has not been as helpful as that which landed some centuries ago. It was a better initiative on that occasion and had lasting results for the democratic practice of the nation.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) for latching on to the heart of the agreement. Contrary to the view of the right hon. Member for Torbay (Sir F. Bennett) that Dublin has set its back to a unitary state or a federal Ireland, Peter Barry, the Irish Foreign Secretary, said prior to the finalising of the agreement that they were not negotiating a unitary sate, a federal state or a joint authority, but a step thereto. I believe that when one knows where one is being taken and one does not want to go there, one is far better saying honestly and immediately, "No."

I came to understand why the Opposition joined the Government in accepting this proposal. However, contrary to the voices that have come from the Government Benches, for the first time the Government of the United Kingdom have declared in a solemn agreement between two Governments that they are prepared to disengage from a part of the United Kingdom. That is what is meant by the article to which we take strong exeception and it is because that article exists that the Government of the Irish Republic were able to sell the agreement to their people.

We have learnt a great deal from Sunningdale—at least, the nationalists and the civil servants have, but I am not sure whether Ministers have. As I listened to the debate, I began to think that a skit by Lewis Carroll had been discovered, because it appears that much of what has been said means whatever the speaker says it means, and they can get through with such arguments. Keeping to a literary allusion, as we are now heading towards the Christmas season it might even be "Great Expectations" we are discussing, because we are building tremendous expectations that the agreement will resolve and settle problems—although only for the next three years, and then we shall have a fresh look at it.

Some hon. Members will remember that on three distinct occasions I asked a Minister to explain on what basis the Government built their confidence that such an agreement will be followed through. I am not impugning the signature of Garret FitzGerald on this agreement, but my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) has already brought before the House the point about the agreement of 1925, which was significantly signed by the same party for the Government of the Irish Republic as this agreement. In subsequent movements, that binding agreement was repudiated.

Although, like others, I was read a lesson about constitutional theologians by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), I understand that a Government may not bind a successive Government, and this is not a solemn treaty between nations but an agreement between Governments. Therefore, it is a stopgap. As we were told by the hon. Member for Stafford that we should learn from the recent summit, I should put it on record that at that time Gorbachev repeated the words of Palmerston:

"England has no friends, only interests."

Therefore, we have to ask—it would probably take a longer debate than this to sort it out—what are the particular interests that propel Her Majesty's Government down this road.

We have been told that the conference will be open, and that we shall know what is going on. I have had similar experiences as those of the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). I have found it difficult to get answers to my question, and one has to get evidence some other way. I have had a series of answers from Her Majesty's Government about the meetings of officials who have already been meeting and been told that it is not the custom to say what officials discussed or who they are. However,

the House and the people of Ulster have been asked to commit themselves to an intergovernmental agreement between Ministers and officials, which says clearly that officials will meet on several occasions, and sometimes on their own. How can the House know what is talked about at such meetings? There may come a time when we have to legislate, but we notice that the Government are not too keen to legislate because they are not too sure of their case. Secrecy will continue.

The Union has been damaged tonight. Although we have had an impassioned spiel, with the imputation that some of us were acting dishonourably by going to the country, we have to do that. Her Majesty's Ministers say that we do not represent the people and that the moderate unionists will go another way. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether you can tell me what a "moderate unionist" is? Is it somebody who lives halfway down the road to nationalism? A unionist is a unionist or he is not. He might express his views in temperate language or he might be more extreme, but when it comes to unionism, one is either for the Union or against it. Conservative Members who follow their Whips to support the Government are voting against the Union, although they might be trying to help their Government at a difficult time. In our Ulster tradition, we say that it is better to be open and honourable.

We are told that this agreement will help the economy. We are assured that money is coming into the economy. Perhaps that is in atonement for the money that went out to America from our economy. Perhaps some rich American business people will make amends for the £50 million that has gone through De Lorean. How can the Premier of the Irish Republic hope to get money from America invested in Northern Ireland when he has not been able to resolve his country's difficulties by such investment?

Further, we are told that instability is stopping finance from America going into Northern Ireland. However, if an American business firm wants to invest in the Republic of Ireland, it can do so. On the other hand, if it wants to invest in Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, it will hesitate to do so if there is the possibility that in a short time Northern Ireland will no longer be part of the United Kingdom. It will put its money elsewhere. Therefore, the greatest task that the House can perform in restoring stability is to say loud and clear to the terrorists and the political joiners from the Irish Republic and in the House that there is to be no change in the constitutional position.

I have in my hand a copy of *The Equal Citizen*. It was not written by people who would normally support my party. It puts on record what I have already said. I have also a letter from another man who lives in north Belfast and therefore will not vote for me. Using "Erskine May" and the traditions of our British democracy, he points out that if the House is serious about maintaining Northern Ireland within the Union and representing the people properly, it should be prepared to organise the party structures in Northern Ireland and not cut a sizeable section of the people of Northern Ireland from the proper democratic process in this place. I know one reason why they are not—they know that they do not speak for the people of Northern Ireland. Protestants and Catholics are intrinsically, and by and large by a majority, for the Union and only the Union.

As we have heard so many ifs, I am reminded of a law professor who used to tell us that if a cow had a tail long enough, it would reach the moon—if.

7.28 pm

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) was right to draw our attention to the fact that Northern Ireland unionists had never been accepted as truly British by the United Kingdom Government. However, they are, and in many ways they are the best of British, but unlike the English, Welsh and Scots, they have always had to fight to remain British. To adapt a Latin tag, they are saying, "Civis Britannicus Sum." That is a proud cry which I hope that this and future Governments will make even prouder, but it has always had an embattled ring to it in the mouths of British citizens in Northern Ireland. The agreement is only the latest in a long history of challenges to the birthright of British citizens in Northern Ireland. I am sure that, like other agreements, it will be defeated. One day a wiser Government than the present one will integrate Northern Ireland fully into the United Kingdom with generous arrangements for those who choose to be outside it. There will then be justice and equality for all in Northern Ireland.

I disagree with the Government's judgment on this so profoundly that I have no choice but to vote against the motion. However, I do not believe that the Government have acted at all dishonourably. No one who knows my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister could possibly believe that she would act dishonourably, but this issue is past being one of honour and my right hon. Friend and her colleagues are guilty of an error of monumental and historic significance.

The Government's motives in this matter are clearly understandable. They arise out of a certain war weariness, an impatience to end the killing, pain, agony, misery and suffering in Northern Ireland in the past 16 years, and a desire to end the burden that Northern Ireland imposes on the rest of the country. If the Government have made an error in judging how to end the trouble, that is not necessarily unworthy. Under prolonged pain there are times when even the bravest of us would wonder whether we could go on enduring such pain. A plausible and beguiling opponent is able to convince one that there can be peace with honour and the price to be paid in what might appear to be the simple notion of sovereignty seems not excessive compared with the blessed relief that comes with the end of the pain. Surrender can seem sweet when it brings an end to violence, especially if it can be dressed up to resemble a fresh political initiative.

I can conceive of no circumstances in which an abridgement of our sovereignty over Northern Ireland in favour of the Irish Republic would be justified. However, I must acknowledge that if the agreement brought peace to Ulster it would be a triumph. The question is, will it bring peace? I am surprised at the gullibility of so many of my right hon. and hon. Friends, who are normally sane and responsible, in accepting that peace will come to Northern Ireland because the Irish Republic has been given a part to play in its administration in return for a political gesture. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister makes that claim, and that is good enough for some hon. Members. Many pious hopes for peace and stability in Northern Ireland have been expressed, but there has not been the slightest shred of evidence that the agreement is the way to achieve that peace.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): My hon. Friend has made some fair points and seems to be influenced by article 7(*c*) of the agreement, which states clearly:

"The two Governments agree that there is a need for a programme of special measures in Northern Ireland to improve relations between the security forces."

Does my hon. Friend accept that there is now a heavy burden of responsibility on the Government of the Republic to ensure that relations on security are improved? If there is not, many of my right hon. and hon. Friends who, like me, will be voting for this agreement will be sadly disillusioned.

Mr. Stanbrook: My hon. Friend is quite correct. That point has been made in previous contributions to the debate, including that of the right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason), a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and that of the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). That is an important element if we have to have the agreement and if it is to be fair to our country.

Sir Frederic Bennett: My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has given valid reasons for not wanting the agreement. He owes it to the House to propose an alternative course of action.

Mr. Stanbrook: In demolishing an opponent's argument as I hope that I am doing now, there is no need to erect an alternative edifice. I believe, however, that there is another course for Northern Ireland which could be adopted by this or any British Government. It would to some extent be painful and it would certainly be expensive, but in the long run it would be cheaper than any other course so far proposed. That option is complete integration of the Province with the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland could be treated like Scotland, Wales or any other region in the United Kingdom. Its citizens would be able to elect their representatives in this Parliament to govern them in the same way as constituents in Scotland and Wales are governed.

There is no evidence that peace will be the reward for abandoning the position which successive British Governments have defended for more than half a century. Will the IRA end its violence now that it seems to have helped to bring the British Government so far along the road to withdrawal from Northern Ireland? Will the republican minority cease to support the IRA now that the Dublin Government are there to represent them locally? Will the Dublin Government's acceptance of the constitutional guarantee to the majority make the slightest difference? Of course it will not.

Dame Jill Knight: Will my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) address himself to a crucial question? Will there be a change in the way in which requests for extradition are dealt with by the Dublin Government? Of 96 requests for extradition, only two have been allowed. Does my hon. Friend think that the agreement will alter that?

Mr. Stanbrook: I do not think the agreement will alter that. That matter is not covered in the agreement. The Dublin Government promise in the communiqué to promote the idea that the Republic should become a party to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism, but that is as unlikely a prospect as it has been for the many years since the convention was signed.

Will there be peace after 12 months' experience of the Intergovernmental Conference promoting the interests of the republican minority against those of the majority? The unionists are often ignored, reviled and lectured by many of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). They were not consulted during the making of the agreement. Will they agree to live with the agreement? Will the sight of jubilant Irish-Americans, never the friends of Ulster——

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): In the course of his rhetorical questions, does my hon. Friend think that the money that pours in for Noraid from Chicago or New York will stop?

Mr. Stanbrook: I imagine that, far from stopping, the efforts to get that money will only increase because the fund raisers will say, "We are on our way, boys, and we are making progress towards our objective," which is to get the British out of Ireland.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough) *rose*——

Mr. Stanbrook: The Official Opposition in this Parliament are giving authority to the objective of a united Ireland, and this agreement is a step on the way to that.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stanbrook: I shall give way later if the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue now.

Will the sight of jubilant Irish-Americans and the delight of the nationalists help the unionists to accept the agreement? Of course it will not.

What the Government have done to the unionist cause is to promote the idea of an independent Ulster which, despite the advocacy of the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), is likely to lead to a situation in which at best the minority are overridden and at worst there is civil war. The agreement is humiliating to Britain because by its terms it states that we can no longer, unaided, provide fair government for all our people. The Government are saying that a foreign Government will be called in to speak on behalf of some of our people. What an abdication of responsibiliy that is. The apparent legality of the document is a blind and likely to mislead.

Mr. Parry: There has been a suspicion that President Reagan has leaned on the Prime Minister and on the Taoiseach to reach an agreement so that the Americans can have a say in northern and southern Ireland affairs.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am sure that it is a perfectly reasonable inference to assume from what has happened that there has been pressure for foreign Governments to reach this agreement. As it involves a humiliating loss of sovereignty for this country one assumes that it could not have occurred without such pressure.

Article 2 of the agreement refers grandiosely to the "sovereignty" of the two Governments as though any such thing existed. As a constitutional lawyer, I have always understood that sovereignty was an attribute of the state, of the United Kingdom, and that, following Dicey, Parliament was supreme within the United Kingdom. A transitory Government entrusted with executive power for a limited purpose are never sovereign. No matter how often my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister may sign

documents claiming that hers is a sovereign Government, that is not so and it is not possible under the constitution of the United Kingdom.

Why is the word "sovereignty" attributed to Governments in the agreement? It is because the agreement is not an international treaty between two sovereign states, as some have claimed it to be. It is not even made on behalf of the United Kingdom. It is not made in the name of the Queen, which would be necessary if it were a treaty made on behalf of the United Kingdom. It does not bind the United Kingdom. More important, and perhaps more sinister, it does not bind the Irish Republic. It may bind Dr. FitzGerald and his colleagues because he and his Government are parties to an intergovernmental agreement and have signed a document in token of their acceptance, but the agreement does not bind their successors, as it would if it really were an international treaty between two sovereign states.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that some of us oppose the agreement for reasons other than those that he has given? We believe that the agreement strengthens rather than weakens the border between the six and the 26 counties, and those of us who wish to see a United Ireland oppose the agreement for that reason.

Mr. Stanbrook: I appreciate that other hon. Members may have reasons different from mine for opposing the agreement. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the agreement strengthens the border when he wants to get rid of the border, he will naturally follow that view in voting today. I am saying that the rights and interests of the unionists of Northern Ireland should be uppermost in our minds and that we should never surrender them to anyone else or to any foreign Government. That is a different proposition. I cannot make the hon. Gentleman's case for him as I simply do not believe in it.

The agreement is binding on the two Governments who have signed it. Dr. FitzGerald could not arrange for it to be binding on two sovereign states including the Republic of Ireland because the constitution of the Republic lays claim to Northern Ireland and he as Prime Minister has no right to abandon that claim on behalf of the Republic in adopting a constitutional guarantee for the majority in Northern Ireland. Such a guarantee can be given as a political gesture, but it has no binding legal force on anyone but the present Government of the Republic. In other words, we are abandoning one of the proudest features of our independence for a mere political gesture from a transitory Government.

Until now, we could say to interfering foreigners, "Thank you for your interest, but this is our land and you have no right to interfere." The agreement means that we can no longer say that. From now on, we shall be plagued by Spain demanding a role in the affairs of Gibraltar, Argentina demanding a role in the affairs of the Falklands, and so on. Even Jamaica, India and other states will now have a precedent for demanding the right to be consulted about the grievances of their citizens in the United Kingdom.

Stripped of the blarney about sovereign Governments, the agreement amounts to an offer by Dr. FitzGerald and his colleagues to recognise reality in the shape of the unionist majority in Northern Ireland in exchange for the right to be consulted about matters affecting the republican minority. We should reject it because it is a bad agreement, conceived in desperation, born out of the fear of violence and foreign pressure and confirmed in folly. It will make matters worse, not better, in Northern Ireland, and I for one will have no truck with it.

7.47 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the 47 days of debate on the Floor of the House about the Scotland and Wales Bills an exasperated colleague said sourly that one of the functions of any assembly in Edinburgh should be responsibility for Northern Ireland affairs. I am a Celt and a Scot and I say with humility that a great part of the problem is "us", and not least the English.

Charles I, Stratford, Cromwell, Peel, Gladstone, Lloyd George and, in our own time, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), Harold Wilson and my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), all tried, but the truth of the matter is that from this side of the water we have had singularly little success in dealing with the affairs of Ireland.

Why, then, should we imagine that the present initiative can succeed? I do not say this with any venom, but anything from this side of the water is unlikely to succeed. Good, decent, well-meaning men such as my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth have tried, but where have those attempts got us?

Even if the present proposition were a starter, the way in which the Prime Minister has gone about it makes it an absolute non-starter. It is a recipe for distrust and for all sorts of difficulties in the future because the Ministers who have put it forward have spoken with forked tongues.

There was an important point in the debate when the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) intervened during the speech of the Secretary of State and asked a perfectly legitimate question about the role of the police. I do not yet, of course, have the *Hansard* in front of me but my understanding is that the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds was reassured that the responsibility for the police would be a matter for this House and for the British Government. That is not the impression of Dublin. The Irish Minister of Justice, Mr. Noonan, who is a careful man, said to an American audience:

"In effect, we have been given a major and substantial role in the day-to-day running of Northern Ireland."

What I want to know from the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Chelsea (Mr. Scott) is, whose version is correct? Either the Irish Minister of Justice is misleading the Americans or the Secretary of State is misleading the House and I ask the Under-Secretary who is right? I give him the opportunity to reply. Well, this is symptomatic of the trouble. Ministers will not answer. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) made a remarkable speech. He asked serious questions but he too got absolutely no answer to his serious questions.

I have known the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for a long time. No man was more courteous when it came to piloting the Wildlife and Countryside Act through Parliament. As a Member of Parliament sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen, I had to visit the Minister on matters relating to railway investments and constituency problems. He is an agreeable, decent, nice Englishman. I watched him during the speech of the hon. Member for Upper Bann and he became quite irritated, he turned off and became impatient. The right hon. Member

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

for Old Bexley and Sidcup said that he does not understand these Irish people. This is precisely the difficulty of the English.

What about Scotland? I have a certain record in relation to devolution and no one can accuse me of being a Scottish nationalist but if the Secretary of State for Scotland had not been Willie Ross, then, later my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) or later still, the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) but had been the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) what the heck would I be saying?

Ministers from the constituencies of Bath and Pudsey have been sent to Northern Ireland because it is a step on the ministerial ladder. This is English patronage and it does damn all for Northern Ireland. They are there for a short period. I know that some, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) who, unfortunately, is not here, developed a caring and passionate interest. But to others it is just a job which is simply one step up the ministerial ladder, so what can we expect other than mutual antagonism? This is no way to solve the historic problems of Ireland.

Although I may be unpopular for saying this, and although I do not wish to criticise the soldiers of the British Army, in 1969 I pleaded with my senior colleagues not to send troops into Northern Ireland and especially not the Scottish troops. I did so on the grounds that once we put the Army in it would be much more difficult to pull it out. As long as the British Army is there — I am not criticising the forces—this problem will go on and on. I would pull them out.

It has been said that the situation created will lead to a holocaust. Of course we do not want a holocaust but this is the judgment that I put forward. Left to themselves, the Irish would sort things out.

I have visited the Maze and talked to the hard men. Both sides have relations with one another. I have also visited the women's prison in Armagh and met Elizabeth McKie, a gun-runner and God knows what else. She said — I will not attempt to imitate her brogue — that it would be all right by her if the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was Prime Minister so long as the Brits got out. By some alchemy, if left to themselves, the Irish would sort something out, a reasonable, viable solution. I may be accused of great naivety, but they have an Irish wavelength. I know that the case of Scotland and Wales is very different. Wales has virtually run the Labour party or at least has sent the House Prime Ministers, as has Scotland in the case of Alec Douglas-Home. However, in more than 23 years I can recall only one Northern Irish British Minister, Mr. Chichester-Clark, who was for a short time Minister of State for Employment.

Whatever hon. Members may think about Sinn Fein it is not clever in this situation for the Prime Minister to talk about "terrorists". They have a point of view. It is a use of language that absolutely infuriates the people of Ireland.

Again, the Secretary of State has referred to the minority as a "minority who believe themselves to be Irish." It is a use of language which is patronising. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) knows exactly what I am saying. If we talk like this we cannot be surprised if we get trouble, and are hated.

Five hon. Members have talked about what might happen in certain circumstances and have used the word "holocaust". In the debate in the other place, Lord Dunleath and Lord Moyola have also talked about a holocaust. I ask one simple question. What the heck do we do—I ask Government and my own Front Bench—if in the coming months the Government are asked for more troops? This would mean England and Scotland sinking deeper and deeper into the mire.

I have always followed my party except on devolution and east of Suez but tonight I shall with heavy heart enter a different Lobby from most of my colleagues because I believe that this agreement is unworkable and counter-productive.

Finally, if the Government can do this, why on earth can they not speak to President Alfonsin? Why be selective? I have said enough.

7.59 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): The debate has been going on for some 11 hours and it has been one of the most stimulating that I have heard in my six and a half years here. It has been especially good for two reasons. First, almost every hon. Member has spoken deeply and from the heart and the debate has not been divided by the party politics which, sadly, usually separates the two sides of the House. Secondly, we have heard excellent speeches from hon. Members with widely differing views that they have expressed in moderate terms and as a result of deep thought.

The Leader of the Opposition and my right hon. Friends the Members for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and for Waveney (Mr. Prior) have made speeches that will stand in the annals of Ireland. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) made a speech with which I wholly disagreed but to which I listened with great respect. I admired the way in which he put his case.

I can add little except a historical background to this sad affair which has resulted in Ireland being split into two and the Irish people being divided for a long time. Anybody who considers the history of Ireland in the early part of this century must feel great sorrow at the people of a fine country being so irretrievably divided. I do not believe that in 1921, when the Ulster Parliament was set up, in 1922, when the constitution was established, or in 1925, when the division was finally agreed with southern Ireland, the Government intended to divide Ireland irretrievably into one part foreign nation and another part United Kingdom.

I am reinforced in that belief by what King George V said when he opened the Parliament in Ulster on 22 June 1921. He said:

> "The future lies in the hands of my Irish people. May this historic gathering be the prelude of the day in which the Irish people, North and South, under one Parliament or two, as those Parliaments may themselves decide, shall work together in common love for Ireland upon the sure foundation of mutual justice and respect."

I do not believe that, with those words, he intended to formulate a policy which would result in Ireland being divided between North and South.

It would be wrong for the Government to regard the South as a foreign state with which we can have no truck in affairs that affect the North. Nor do I believe—this is where I differ fundamentally from many of my hon. Friends and most of those who represent Ulster—that the Government must consider that Ulster has to be a part of the United Kingdom for ever. It is absolutely right that Ulster remains part of the United Kingdom as long as that is the express wish of the clear majority. There should be

no change unless a clear majority—not just 51 per cent. —think otherwise. Such a transitory majority can be changed by propaganda. The Government should be prepared to accept a united Ireland, however, if that is the clear wish of the majority in the North. That is what the agreement commits the Government to do.

Much has been said about the loss of sovereignty. I have heard every speech so far. I am a lawyer but, unlike some of my hon. Friends, I do not claim to be expert in constitutional law. I have considered the matter closely and I have not seen one word in the agreement which derogates from the sovereignty of this Parliament.

Mr. Corbyn: In view of the hon. Gentleman's experience as a constitutional lawyer, will he say whether the agreement potentially infringes the concept of neutrality that the Irish Republic has traditionally pursued and whether, if there are further discussions between the British, American and Irish Governments about future defence arrangements, they will endanger Irish neutrality?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I had hoped that we would keep our minds on the problem facing the House rather than on some wild fantasy that might happen. I know nothing of defence matters being discussed by our three respective leaders, but I would welcome such talks, as they would be constructive and in the nation's interests.

The consequences of accepting or refusing the agreement have not been described fully and concisely. What do the agreement's opponents offer if we turn it down? Nothing but a continuation of the strife, sometimes escalating and at other times declining. Such strife is needless. Innocent people will continue to die and the demand for substantial resources from the whole of the United Kingdom will continue. That need not happen if Northern Ireland could live in peace and establish its own prosperity. They are offering nothing but continued hopelessness and war.

I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), whose resignation from the Government caused regret but drew respect from his admirers, but nothing that he said yesterday gave a crumb of comfort to the people of Northern Ireland if matters continue as they are. If we accept the agreement, there is at least hope. I do not pretend that it must necessarily succeed. Much will depend on the Irish elections next year. If we are to assist Dr. FitzGerald to continue——

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): The hon. Gentleman is making an election speech.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: That is not a fair point. The southern Irish are our allies——

Rev. William McCrea: They have never been our allies.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I do not accept that either. The southern Irish are our friends and allies.

Rev. William McCrea: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: Not for the moment. The hon. Gentleman will say that they are neutral. They are none the less our friends and allies—at least many of us think so. As long as Dr. FitzGerald's Government continue in power, the agreement will stand, and the chance of success will be greater. I cannot envisage what will happen if they fall.

There are risks in any agreement that a Government make, but they must be balanced against the possible advantages. The agreement offers hope whereas nothing else does. No alternative has been offered. Only by the co-operation of the people of southern Ireland and Northern Ireland can the future of the whole country be established in peace. It must be the duty of every British Government to strive to return to the circumstances of 1921 and to re-establish the acceptance of our friendship with the Government of southern Ireland. It must be our duty to solve the terrible problem of terrorism and loss of life in Northern Ireland by whatever means. As there is no other way—at least none that has been suggested——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: One was put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook), who advocated the full integration of Ulster with the United Kingdom.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: No alternative that satisfies me has been put forward. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) holds a thoroughly different view from me. I can only speak my mind. I cannot speak for him. Nothing that I have heard offers a way forward for Ireland. That view will be shared by those who follow this debate outside. It must be right for us to support the Government.

8.9 pm

Miss Joan Maynard (Sheffield, Brightside): Many points of view on the agreement have been expressed and many hon. Members have welcomed it. I wish that I could believe that it was, in some part, a solution to the tragedy that faces Ireland, but I cannot. The House must not be misled by the outrage expressed by the unionists. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said:

"The agreement reinforces the Union."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 753.]

That puts the matter clearly. The agreement between Dr. FitzGerald and the Prime Minister does not deal with the real issue, which is the urgent need for the reunification of Ireland. It will not further the cause of peace. There will be no peace in Ireland until that unhappy country is united.

The agreement creates a spurious all-Ireland dimension. Dublin will discover that it has responsibility without power. In exchange, Dublin has accepted the unionist veto and the border—that has never happened before. The Irish Republic's neutrality, already shaken as a result of increased encroachment by the European Community into political and military matters, is undermined by the agreement. Irish sovereignty will be further eroded by the deal because it confers a phoney legitimacy on the 1921 partition of Ireland. Fine Gael has its roots in the original sellout, which gave the Irish people a truncated independence and gave birth to the six-county state. Fine Gael has always played the role of a junior partner to British imperialism.

I suspect that the $500 million that the Americans will pour in is a down payment on a future American base or an accommodation with NATO. I remind the House that Ireland is the only member of the EC that does not yet have an American base.

To a startling degree, the agreement mirrors a report last year by a pro-NATO Right-wing think tank.

Mr. Parry: I agree with my hon. Friend. Does she agree that the Americans are trying to drive the Republic into the Western Alliance?

Miss Maynard: That could be a consequence of the agreement. It is an attempt to pretend that we are dealing with the consequences of partition. It does not deal with the root causes of religious discrimination, sectarian police behaviour or the violence of the British Army and of the paramilitary organisations. Unless we deal with the root cause of the problem—partition—there will be no peace in Ireland and the violence will continue and will spread over here. That is why we have the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976. We cannot deny freedom to other people and retain it ourselves.

There must be a declaration of intent to withdraw from Northern Ireland and the lifting of the veto on constitutional change that has been given to the unionists. The bi-partisan policy that the Labour party, once again, shares with the Tories must go. I shall quote from a leader in *The Mirror*, but not all of it, because it makes personal attacks on the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and some of his colleagues, and I am not in favour of personal attacks. It sums up the issue by saying:

"The only test of the new Ulster agreement is whether it can end or reduce the violence. Unfortunately, there is absolutely no reason to believe it can.

This is a treaty which has no clothes. It cannot do what it claims to do. It cannot carry out what it promises.

Far from weakening men of violence, it encourages them.

The effective abandonment by the Southern Government of the aim of Irish unity will be a recruiting sergeant for the IRA.

The Ulster Unionists will never yield an inch to the Republic so long as they know that, in the last resort, the British Army and Westminster Parliament are behind them. . . .

It may help Dr. Garret FitzGerald, who is a long street behind in the opinion polls. It may help Mrs. Thatcher, who is threatened by both Labour and the Alliance . . . . Mrs. Thatcher has nearly all of Westminster's politicians on her side largely because all parties have failed over Ireland in the past.

But they have failed because they refuse to recognise the heart of the problem, which is the British presence in Ireland. We will not take the first step to peace until that is removed."

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) said that he would be prepared to accept a referendum, not only in Northern Ireland but in the whole of the United Kingdom. I am pleased about that, because normally the unionists argue for a referendum only in Northern Ireland. They want to have it both ways. If they say that they are part of the United Kingdom, they should accept a referendum in the whole of the United Kingdom. If a referendum in the United Kingdom asked people whether they favoured withdrawal from Northern Ireland, there would be a massive vote in support.

There would have been no meetings or agreement but for the growing support for Sinn Fein, which won 43 per cent. of the nationalist vote in the north at the June 1983 election. The agreement is for politicians, not for people. As a friend of mine said, it is an amalgam of the blue Tories, the green Tories and the orange Tories. The real objective of the accord is the destruction of the Sinn Fein vote. On my recent visits to Northern Ireland I realised that what dominated everyone's mind, including Dr. FitzGerald's, was the growing support for Sinn Fein. Many hon. Members argued that Sinn Fein could not win support through the ballot box, but they have been proved wrong. They are now trying to head it off; if that does not work, perhaps they will decide to ban it.

The coalition Government in the south desperately need political success to return to office at the next election. At present they lag behind Fianna Fail by 19 per cent. All previous political initiatives have avoided the partition issue and all have failed. That is the central issue that has fuelled the conflict during the past 17 years. That will not be altered by changing a few street names into Irish. Attempts at devolved government will not stop the violence while the issue on partition remains unsolved.

Mr. Corbyn: Does my hon. Friend accept that the consequences of the British military presence during the past 17 years have been the Diplock courts, the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act and the methods used in Northern Ireland? The problem with the agreement is that the Republic will be forced to support and accept the barbarous methods being used in Northern Ireland.

Miss Maynard: I accept that, and I intend to deal with the matter later.

Some of my colleagues may argue that if the hon. Member for Antrim, North and the unionists are against, we should be in favour of the agreement. The National Front opposes the EC and American bases, but that does not mean that we should be in favour.

When I think of Northern Ireland, repression comes to mind. That is a crucial matter that will undoubtedly undermine the agreement. Many people who are no friends of the republican movement, such as Father Faul and Raymond Murray, believe that the alienation of nationalists from the political, legal and security machinery of the state and the growth in support for Sinn Fein arise from the widespread belief, after 17 years, that repression cannot be eliminated or justice done within Northern Ireland.

I believe that to be true. When I hear people talking about democracy in Northern Ireland, I think, "How can we have democracy in a state whose borders were gerrymandered to provide an inbuilt majority to one group of people?"

Bernadette Devlin, and many others in the early civil rights movement, were not originally campaigning for "Brits out" or for a united Ireland. They believed, naively, that reforms would grant to the minority the civil rights which they had been denied for almost 50 years. Now, 18 years since the civil rights movement was formed, the burning issues in the nationalist community which will ensure that the Sinn Fein vote does not drop include the Diplock courts, the super-grass system, the strip searching of women prisoners in Armagh, the plastic bullets, the daily repression, the searches and the raids, the British Army forts in nationalist areas, the torture and ill-treatment by security forces and the long periods of remand. For example, Tommy Power, who has not been convicted of any crime, has been in custody for three years and 10 months and is on his fifth super-grass. Only one soldier, and no member of the RUC, has been convicted of murder during the past 17 years.

Will all that change when the Irish Government are given a non-executive role in some of the North's affairs? On the contrary. As the agreement allows for cross-border co-operation on security, it may well be a carte blanche for matters to get even worse. Thatcher will now have a more co-operative ally——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady knows that we do not refer to each other by our names in this place.

Miss Maynard: I apologise, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister will have a more co-operative ally. With everything signed and sealed in the open, internment or the banning of Sinn Fein could be introduced without serious

problems. The carrots to tempt the nationalists in Army-occupied areas are a few street names in Irish, promises of American aid, an attempted return to devolved government and possible community policing. However, to maintain support from many nationalists in the north, Dr. FitzGerald cannot be seen to back continued repression unquestioningly. Likewise, not to completely alienate the loyalists, the Prime Minister must be uncompromising in her methods to defeat terrorism. Therein lies the contradiction.

I end where I began by saying that there must be a declaration of intent by the Government to withdraw from Northern Ireland and a consequent lifting of the unionists' veto on constitutional change. Partition must go. A united Ireland is the only solution. The agreement will not bring peace or unity any nearer. It will fail. I wish that I could believe otherwise, and I wish that the amendment in my name and those of some of my hon. Friends had been selected so that I could have voted for it. I must now decide whether to vote against the Government's motion—I shall certainly not vote for the agreement—or whether to abstain.

8.22 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): This agreement is a triumph of hope over experience. I fervently hope that it will work, but I fear that it may not. Nevertheless, I shall do everything possible to ensure that it works, because in Ireland hope must triumph over experience. That statement probably carries the support of the overwhelming majority of the men and women of the RUC, who will be faced with terrible dilemmas as they try to make the agreement work.

My experience of Northern Ireland in recent years has been almost entirely bloody. I have seen terrible things in Crossmaglen, Ballymena and west Belfast, and I have often despaired that there would be any hope of our getting out of this bloody morass. But whenever I feel that way, I consider the ordinary, normal things in Northern Ireland: the glorious countryside, the hard-working population, the devotion of the RUC.

Recently, I saw a ray of hope in Ireland when I attended the special olympic games in a vast stadium in Dublin where about 50,000 people were gathered together. I am the chairman of special olympics, and I walked into that stadium almost arm in arm with Garret FitzGerald. What impressed me was that, during the games, the huge Irish crowd cheered the English team, the Welsh team and the Scottish team, but the loudest cheers were for the team from Ulster. I could not help but believe that, at least on that occasion, there were no northerners and southerners, no Protestants and no Catholics. There were certainly no terrorists. I saw only people of good will coming together in a common cause, and that gave me hope.

I shall support the agreement, with some reluctance, for three reasons. First, I accept what the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday: we cannot go on as we are. The terrible tragedy of Ireland demands that we try again. Secondly, the accident of history has brought together two remarkable personalities. The Prime Minister is a leader who has set her heart on carrying through the agreement and the improvements that can follow from it; and in Garret FitzGerald we have, for once in Ireland, a leader of stature and sensitivity who will take risks to bring peace to that troubled country.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has just entered the Chamber, and I shall say something which I hope will not embarrass her. When she and Dr. FitzGerald attended Mrs. Ghandi's funeral in Delhi, the Prime Minister—perhaps taking a little political risk—invited Dr. FitzGerald to travel back in her RAF aeroplane. It must have been far from easy for him to travel in a Royal Air Force VC10, but he did——

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): He had done it before.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Perhaps, as the right hon. Gentleman says, he had done it before, but there is a time when two remarkable personalities can come together and achieve progress.

The third reason for my support is that I believe, with some misgivings, that on balance the agreement is in the best interests of the RUC. Indeed, I can think of no group that has more to gain than the RUC from any turndown in the graph of violence in Northern Ireland.

However, I have several questions to which I hope my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State can respond at the end of the debate. The first relates to policing by consent, which the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) mentioned. If hon. Members who support Ulster constituencies can demonstrate, as a result of the by-elections, that the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland are against the agreement—I expect that they will do so—what will be the position of the RUC? RUC members have a duty to uphold the law as the House makes it, because this is the United Kingdom Parliament and obedience to it is their duty.

What happens to policing by consent if it is the clear and demonstrated majority will of those who live in Northern Ireland that the agreement shall not prevail? Police officers will face terrible dilemmas. There will be a professional dilemma. How do the police operate against the majority? I need not go into that in detail, because the House will understand what it means in real terms, but under our system of policing one cannot police against a majority.

Secondly, there will be personal dilemmas for the police. If police officers must take strong action against the majority in Northern Ireland, there is likely to be retaliation against their homes and their families. There is nothing new about that, but personal dilemmas of police officers seeking to apply the law as made by this House against the will of the majority in Northern Ireland and seeing their own families put at risk as a result are real. Ministers need to speak to the police and show them that they understand this. If necessary, they should guarantee that there will be proper protection for the homes and families of police officers if they have to take the courageous step of policing against the demonstrated will of the majority.

My next concern is that of the Intergovernmental Conference. I read the communiqué with interest and discussed it with the police service, particularly paragraph 8, which states that the conference will consider

"the application of the principle that the Armed Forces (which include the Ulster Defence Regiment) operate only in support of the civil power, with the particular objective of ensuring as rapidly as possible that, save in the most exceptional circumstances, there is a police presence in all operations which involve direct contact with the community".

That is already the policy. But I ask the Secretary of State to listen carefully to the experience of those in the

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border areas where, despite that policy, the reality is that in many cases it is not possible for there to be ordinarily a police presence. If there is, the police die. There is no choice about this. I wish there were, but the reality in border areas is that there must be armoured protection. There must be protected position. The police are soft targets. That is why so many of them at Newry and elsewhere have been killed. I hope that it is clearly understood, at least by British Ministers, that the attempts to place a police presence at all points where there is contact with the community will not work. It is important that Dr. Garret FitzGerald understands that. I believe that he does but it is important that the police are confident that Ministers are aware of their position.

I turn now to the problem of political policing. One of the greatest achievements of the RUC over the past 12 years is that it has evolved since, dare I say, the bad old days of Stormont when, in the eyes of most Catholics, the police too often appeared to be the arm of the Orange Order. Since that time the RUC has become politically independent. The Chief Constable of the RUC respects the policies but he takes no orders from political Ministers. Its men and women, of all ranks, are the servants of the Queen, not the Government. They are the limbs of the law. They are not the agents of politicians. It should be a matter of pride for the House and the RUC that they have achieved this improvement.

The question that now arises is whether the new Anglo-Irish Conference will be able to interfere in that type of independent policing. I believe that the temptation for politicians and civil servants will be great. Let us suppose that Ministers from both sides of the border were to conclude that Anglo-Irish harmony would be best served by banning a parade, overlooking a crime or not pressing politically sensitive charges. Would not the conference at least be tempted to bring pressure on the police to apply the law in a manner that best suited the conference's purposes?

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, gave me an assurance earlier that there will be no operational control. I accept that assurance. My anxiety is that a conference takes on an inner life of its own. Perhaps my right hon. Friend will be able to dispose of my anxiety easily, but there will be occasions, in the detail of handling security discussions, when the southern Irish members will suggest to my right hon. Friend and his colleagues that it would be best if some things were done in Northern Ireland by the police or that some things were not done. That is the reality. It would not be acceptable to the Metropolitan police and police forces elsewhere in Britain. It is crucial that the political independence of the RUC is not compromised.

Mr. Tom King: What was the point of my giving way to my hon. Friend, when he put precisely that point to me during my speech? I gave him a categorical assurance. I make it clear that I take the decisions with the Minister responsible for the police. The agreement changes nothing about who takes the decisions. My hon. Friend used the phrase "overlooking a crime". It gave me great cause for concern that he could even suggest that. I make it absolutely clear, with the authority of my office, that there will be no political interference in the operation of the RUC. I have already made clear my full confidence in the Chief Constable and the members of the RUC and I hope that, for the second time, my hon. Friend will accept that assurance.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: My right hon. Friend need not get himself into a lather. I accept his assurance now as I did before, but I wanted to put the matter more fully to him because, with great respect, he has not had quite as much experience of policing as I have. It is not that there will be a political instruction from the conference—I know that—but there is such a thing as a nod and a wink. There is pressure of various sorts. That happens now and always will.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will understand the dilemma. The police frequently overlook crimes. There are crimes committed all over the place, but what the police have to do is balance the merits of enforcing the criminal law with the merits of maintaining the Queen's peace. So all crimes are not pursued. Much crime is overlooked because there is a wider responsibility on the police. I wanted my right hon. Friend to say that under no circumstances that he can visualise will there be any prospect of the traditions of the southern Irish police, who are politically led and politically responsible to their Minister, infiltrating Northern Ireland. I accept that he has broadly given that assurance. It is a great source of comfort to me and to the police.

I want to end on a broader front. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who was speaking for the Labour party, made a helpful contribution to the debate, as did the Leader of the Opposition, but I was disturbed to hear him say of the people of Northern Ireland—I know he felt it deeply, and who knows he may be right—that

"the British people do not really recognise them as British. The British see them as Irish. They may call them Northern Irish or a range of other things, such as Ulstermen, but ultimately the British people see them as Irish."

He also said that Northern Ireland is

"only slightly a part of the United Kingdom." — [*Official Report*, 26 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 821-22.]

Despite the consensus that has emerged in the House, particularly between the Front Benches, I hope that it is not part of the thinking or the philosophy of my party—the Conservative and Unionist party—that the people of Northern Ireland are not really British, or that they are anything other than our fellow citizens. They are as British as we are. I repudiate the statement of the hon. Gentleman on behalf of the Labour party that they are

"only slightly a part of the United Kingdom".

It is because, on balance, I believe the agreement will preserve Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom that I and many of my hon. Friends will support it.

8.39 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): This long debate, which is now drawing to its close, has not, at its heart, really been about Ulster. It has been about the United Kingdom; or to put the same point in another way, it has been about this House, for what we have been debating these two days is the proposition that the Government should be approved for having made with another country an agreement whereby a conference will be set up to exercise surveillance over the administration of the United Kingdom.

It is, in my opinion, unacceptable and deeply offensive to the United Kingdom as represented in this House that

there should be any dilution whatsoever in the responsibility of Parliament for the governance in every respect, the law and the administration of the United Kingdom. We are now proposing to see made a unique and unprecedented breach in that position, an unprecedented arrangement whereby a formal position is allocated to another country in respect of the conduct of affairs in the United Kingdom. That is an affront to this House and to the people of this country, which I believe many people outside the House and, I am sure, many hon. Members have understood for what it really is.

The affront is not lessened but rather sharpened because that agreement relates to only one part of the United Kingdom. It is indeed a specially unique, an unprecedented, proposition that we should endow another country with an institutional right within the United Kingdom, a right of proposal and statement of views, a right formalised in a conference, to influence the administration and the law of a particular part of the United Kingdom.

Fifteen of us are sent here by constituents in Northern Ireland. When they send us here, they intend that we shall sit here as an intergral part of this assembly, and by doing so they express not only their consciousness and their purpose of themselves being a part of the United Kingdom, but their will that they, like the rest of the United Kingdom, should live under law which is made, and exclusively made, by the Parliament of the United Kingdom. To send Members to sit in Parliament is to accept the right, and the exclusive right, of Parliament to make the law under which oneself lives.

What is incompatible with that claim and with that legislative power of this Chamber is that it should be exercised differently in respect of different parts of the United Kingdom. We cannot all come here accepting law made by a majority in this House, because we are all part of the United Kingdom, and then see that law imposed differently—different law made for the different parts of the kingdom.

No doubt hon. Members will be quick to recall that in fact we legislate separately and differently for different parts of the kingdom. We pass separate Scottish legislation because, under The Treaty of Union, the Scots retain the right to their own legal system. Well, that is true, but behind it lies the assent of that particular part of the kingdom to be legislated for in that way—and more than assent, for not many Scots would accept that this House had a right, by virtue of being the Parliament of the United Kingdom, to pass English law which was to be applied in the courts of Scotland. Therefore, we see that there is a counterpart to the undoubted right of this Parliament to make the law for the United Kingdom. It is that, wherever it makes law differently for certain parts of the United Kingdom, it can do so only in accordance with the wishes, and normally at the petition, of the people of those parts of the United Kingdom.

As I have said, we recognise that in the case of Scotland and the rights that are protected by treaty. We recognise it wherever we legislate privately by bylaw or otherwise and differently for different places in the realm, but we do that only on the petition and with the assent of those for whom we legislate. We recognised that principle outstandingly when a previous Parliament passed two Acts conferring devolved administration and legislation upon Scotland and Wales, but refused to bring that into effect until the people of Scotland, in respect of Scottish devolution, and Wales, in respect of Welsh devolution, had uttered their agreement—agreement which in the event they withheld in the terms in which it was required by that legislation.

To claim the right to impose upon a part of this kingdom law—differential law—which that part has not asked for or assented to is to undermine the moral authority of this House. It is to undermine the authority of Parliament as the law-making institution of the whole of this kingdom. What we are proposing to do—to impose upon Northern Ireland a change in the manner in which it is administered by the authority of this House, contrary to the wishes of the majority of the people of that part of the kingdom—is to strike at the very essence of that compact between the electorate and Parliament upon which parliamentary sovereignty depends.

It has been said many times in the debate not simply that the people of Northern Ireland must knuckle under, like it or not, to any legislation that the House passes—I have dealt with that—but that they as part of the United Kingdom, as willing, assenting electors of Unionist Members of the House, must knuckle under to whatever the House resolves by the vote this evening.

There is a deep misapprehension here. This House, by resolution, has no power to make law, nor has the other place by resolution any power to make law. Law is made in this country only in a particular way, by both Houses through a certain legislative procedure that eventually receives the assent of the Crown. It is not true to say that if the motion that is before the House is carried tonight the law of the United Kingdom will have been altered. All that will have happened will be that approval has been given, perhaps by a majority, to the action of the Government in entering into an external contract—a contract between this Government and another Government—although, admittedly, a contract in respect of what we would say are the internal affairs of the United Kingdom.

But no one will be able to say after the Division tonight that the people of Northern Ireland are under an obligation to accept—whatever might be the meaning of the term "accept" in that context—the Anglo-Irish agreement that has been made between the two Prime Ministers. We are again straining beyond its moral limit the authority of this House when we demand that by a resolution of the House we shall have the power to impose the will of Government upon a portion of this country differentially from the rest.

How comes it that we are engaged in such an unprecedented undertaking? What reward are we all to receive for this infraction of the moral basis of our parliamentary government? We are offered two rewards. We have said that two prizes will be gained—reconciliation, and the more effective combating of terrorism in Northern Ireland. I shall examine those two propositions.

The proposition is that in Northern Ireland there are two sections of the community that are deeply at odds over the question of the country to which they ought to belong and that their conflict is inimical to the peaceful and happy prosperity of that part of the United Kingdom. Does any rational person seriously suppose that when there is a deep division within a community reconciliation is to be procured between the parties to that dispute, if dispute it be, by installing an external authority to have a special responsibility for being the protector and representative of one of those bodies?

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

Does not any rational person see that the natural consequence of that must be to inflame whatever implicit antagonisms there may be in such a situation? Why, the very proposition needs only to be stated for its unacceptability to be seen — people are quarrelling; bring in somebody from outside; endow them with unprecedented authority; put them in an unprecedented position so that they may speak for, and advocate the position of, one party to that dispute. That is not a view which, hopeful or unhopeful, any rational person could take.

The Prime Minister is a very rational person indeed, and she does not believe that reconciliation is to be procured in Northern Ireland by what is being proposed. The Prime Minister knows perfectly well what anyone from a general view of what is proposed could concede — the likely outcome of bringing in, of all external countries, the Irish Republic, and installing it in a special privileged position in respect of one of the two communities, or traditions as they are called, in Northern Ireland.

Nor does the Prime Minister really share the proposition that if we do this thing we shall have gained, or be on the way to gaining, the upper hand over terrorism. For she knows that it is because of the constant pressure of terrorism and the urging — do this or the terror will continue; do this or the terror cannot be dealt with — that we have been brought to the position of entering into this treaty with another country, this treaty which many people, not only in this House and not only in Northern Ireland, regard as a humiliation.

The very notion that a Government of the Irish Republic would be in a position to be seen to be assisting the British in putting down the IRA in a part of the United Kingdom is another proposition which needs only to be stated for its absurdity to be grasped. The Prime Minister knows well that the Chief Constable was perfectly right in what he said in Texas, when he declared that the Irish Republic had nothing to offer this country by way of assistance in the combating of terrorism. That is the situation of the Irish Republic. It is inherent in its position. It is inherent in the nature of that state as well as in its location.

There is another fact that the Prime Minister also knows. She knows that when a year ago it was believed, wrongly as has turned out, that she had turned her back decisively upon the series of attempts which have been the characteristic of British policy in Northern Ireland at least since 1969 to wangle circumstances in Northern Ireland which could colourably be presented as progress towards an all-Ireland state, there was in the Province a most remarkable sense of stability, reassurance and hope for the future. She knows, because she has been told, and we know that she has remembered it, that people look back to those weeks with great regret as a time when the people of this supposedly divided community began to say to one another, "Thank God. At last we know there is to be no more hivering and havering; no more messing about. We know where we stand. We know the framework in which we and probably our children will have to live their lives, and now we can get on with the job of living and working together."

All these things — the hollowness of the claims for the consequences of this agreement and the boon which it is in the power of a British Government and this Parliament to confer upon Northern Ireland by lifting from it the constant spectre of a potential alteration in its status — were known to the Prime Minister.

Why was it, then, that since last November the officials who were heard saying that they would now set to work to turn the lady round got their way? How was it that month after month, progressively, British Ministers and the British Cabinet were brought to an agreement which nobody really wanted, which nobody really believed in and which that most determined of all people, the Prime Minister, in her heart knew she did not want? If anybody doubts that, he had only to sit in this House yesterday afternoon and hear the presentation by the Prime Minister. He had only to watch the Prime Minister at the signing at Hillsborough to understand that here was someone doing what she knew was wrong and what she knew was contrary to her instincts and knowledge of the position. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."]

We speak in this House, upon our own responsibility and it is our business to say in this House what we believe and what we know. It is fair to ask what force it could be, what power was it, that could turn round the Prime Minister and the Government. What power could be brought to bear—*[Interruption.]*—certainly not common sense. What power could be brought to bear upon the Government to compel them over a series of months to the capitulation which is embodied in this draft agreement with all the clauses written into it right the way through the wording which covers up the place of other agreements which lie behind it? What force was it? That is the question to which we are entitled to have an answer.

If I used last week an expression which the Prime Minister found offensive, it was because I was indignant at a result being produced for purposes and reasons which were not the real ones. The real reasons have never been denied by Ministers. The real reasons are that the Government were under external pressure which they could not resist. Ministers have repeatedly admitted that this was the case. When, shortly after entering office, the right hon. Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior), who is absent tonight, described the problem in Northern Ireland as international, he knew very well what he was talking about. So let me be more precise.

This has been done because the United States insisted that it should be done. The Ministers on the Front Bench, though they may grin and waggle their heads, know perfectly well, as does the Prime Minister, that that is the case. Hon. Members must still ask what power and reason there could be. What motives could hold the United States and what leverage could it exert to bring about this result? That is a question which Ministers are probably not permitted to answer. No doubt the file is marked "Top secret". But there is no reason why it should not be ventilated in this House.

The United States has, in the form of NATO, enjoyed in the territory and the territorial waters of the Irish Republic important facilities for a number of years and wishes to extend those facilities which are regarded as vital by the strategists of NATO. The possession of those facilities and the possibility of continuing and extending them is dependent upon the compliance of the Irish Republic.

This means that the Irish Republic can exact the price that it has always held out as that which has to be paid before it will even consider collaboration with NATO. That is on record in many places; it is well known; and

it was referred to earlier this evening. The price is that it should be given a visible prospect which it can interpret as progress towards an all-Ireland state that would include Ulster. It is that which has been the cause of this turning around of the understanding and the intentions of the Government. It is that which lies behind what is imposed upon this House and which it is intended should be imposed upon a part of the United Kingdom.

To comply, to yield, to bow to pressure, to accept for one's country what the Government have accepted in this Anglo-Irish agreement is a responsibility that will be borne by a large part of the House by its vote tonight, but the ultimate responsibility will continue and in the end it will avenge itself. When in the coming months the consequences of this understanding work themselves out and the Prime Minister watches with uncomprehending compassion the continued sequence of terrorism, murder and death in Northern Ireland which this agreement will not prevent but will maintain and foment, let her not send to ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for her.

9 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Having listened on their radios to this two-day debate, the people of Northern Ireland will know by now which right hon. and hon. Members are on the side of the British families and the British citizens of Northern Ireland. Many people in Ulster are dismayed by the agreement. After yesterday's debate, I spoke on the telephone to a few people in Northern Ireland. They told me that there were very few friends of Ulster in the House of Commons. They expect the vote later this evening to end in a defeat for them.

In my constituency of Mid-Ulster people have been butchered by brutal IRA murderers. Its members have committed some of the most barbaric acts that have ever been committed against humanity. The people of Mid-Ulster have suffered from terrorism for many years, yet they declare that they are as British as any right hon. or hon. Member.

Even if the House makes the historic decision to end the Union and even if there is a massive vote against the Ulster unionists, nobody will take from the people of Northern Ireland their blood-bought heritage. We would rather die than surrender to any Irish republican who seeks to destroy us or murder us. We would rather die than have to agree to what people of Ulster decided at the ballot box that they did not wish to support.

This decision will not be reached as a matter of individual conscience or because right hon. and hon. Members are voting in a way that they know is right. I have spoken to several right hon. and hon. Members, and I know that there has been deep heart-searching about this agreement. They say that in their hearts they do not believe that this agreement will bring peace to Northern Ireland, but they have been told by their Whips that they must vote against the Ulster unionists. However, even though they are in the minority, there are right hon. and hon. Members who have courage. They will stand by the Union and by the loyal citizens of Her Majesty's domains, which include British Ulster.

We have been told that the agreement will bring peace, stability and reconciliation to Northern Ireland. Do Her Majesty's Government really believe that it will? The Presbyterian church in Ireland, the Methodist church in Ireland and the Church of Ireland do not believe that it will. They are not hotheads. In previous debates the Prime Minister told me that I was getting worked up, but it cannot be said that the churches in Ireland are getting worked up. The considered opinion of the Presbyterian church in Ireland is that the agreement is unworkable. That is also the considered opinion of the Methodist church: in Ireland the Church of Ireland and the majority of right hon. and hon. Members of the alliance—the middle ground—who believe that they are the sacrificial lambs, they do not think that the agreement will work.

Among those who disagree is the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), who said:

"I disagree profoundly with the new policy on which the Government have embarked. I fear that this change of policy will prolong and not diminish Ulster's agony. With all my heart—it is quite a big heart—I pray that I am wrong."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 765.]

I take another example. Does the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) agree that this agreement is the answer to Ulster's problem? In the House, he said:

"a foolish initiative can make it more difficult for the communities in Northern Ireland to live peacefully. I fear that this initiative will make it more difficult."—[*Official Report*, 26 November 1985; Vol. 87, c. 819.]

That is the considered opinion of a former Minister in the Northern Ireland Office. Let it not be said that it is only the Ulster unionists and the churches in Northern Ireland who believe that the agreement is unworkable.

The IRA realises that it has bombed the two Prime Ministers to the table. It knows that it was its success that encouraged the initiative. We should listen carefully to what Opposition Members say. Members of Her Majesty's Opposition are going into the Aye Lobby tonight because they believe that the agreement is the first step to a united Ireland. I have a message for them and for everyone in the House. It is that six into 26 will never go. It does not matter who is standing at the Dispatch Box. The Ulster people have decided. Last Saturday, 200,000 people stood solemnly and with grim determination in Belfast. There were those who tried to minimise the importance of that demonstration, but no one can take away the reality. The people of Ulster will decide. No matter what deal has been done they will never accept this agreement because it is a way into a united Ireland. They have no intention of going that way.

Mr. Porter: I am trying to be helpful. Does my hon. Friend accept that those of us who are English unionists and who have not, for reasons unknown to us, been able to catch Mr. Speaker's eye, will be in the No Lobby voting against this agreement? Apart from those of my hon. Friends whom he has mentioned, there are many of us who believe that this agreement is an affront to the Union.

Rev. William McCrea: I should like to thank my hon. Friend for his remark. Every true blue unionist will be in the No Lobby tonight with the Ulster people standing by their fellow citizens. He who wants to pay lip service to the Union will trot into the Aye Lobby and do as his Whip tells him.

Those in Northern Ireland who took courage from the Prime Minister's determined stand against the Argentine aggressor have asked about this agreement, "Why did she do it?" That solemn question will be answered in the Prime Minister's conscience not just tonight but in the years to come. It is a matter that is solemn before God. She will answer to the betrayed people of Ulster. Why did she do it? She may have her reasons. Was it Reagan? Was it because of the Sinn Fein uprising? Was it because the

[Rev. William McCrea]

Government's mid-term policies in the United Kingdom were not succeeding that she had to go off at a tangent? Did she believe that she had to think of something else, bearing in mind that the next election will be fought upon law and order? Was that the reason? No one but the right hon. Lady knows the answer.

The people of Northern Ireland will be asking for an answer because, unfortunately, the House will tonight consign them to more coffins, more death and more destruction.

Much will lie on the breast and heart of right hon. and hon. Members on the Treasury Bench. I believed that this was the Conservative and Unionist party. Unfortunately, they have decided that the unionists in Northern Ireland are a liability, instead of desiring them to be in the family. That decision has been made, and let us remember that, it having been made and having been brought to the Floor of the House, we must abide by the result.

Northern Ireland, British Ulster, is not dead. From the ashes in which the House hopes to leave it tonight it will rise again to greater victory. We, the people of Ulster, will make the choice.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Stuart Bell.

Mr. Parry: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Representing the oldest Irish community in England and having sat here since 2.30 this afternoon——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am very sorry to tell the hon. Member that he is not the only one who feels frustrated this evening. There have been a number of long speeches from both sides of the House.

Mr. Parry: May I make one quick point, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: No, this is not the opportunity for the hon. Member to do so.

Mr. Parry: The point I wish to put——

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Parry *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I had called Mr. Stuart Bell.

9.11 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I wish at the outset to bring the debate into the context of the Anglo-Irish agreement. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer), in a memorable speech, which set the tone for the speeches that followed, sought to assure the House that the Ango-Irish agreement was not the first raindrop in the deluge.

He reminded me of some words used by Winston Churchill in a book on the first world war in which he illustrated the way in which the whole map of Europe had been changed. There had been changes in the modes of thought of men, he wrote, so that their whole outlook on affairs had encountered violent and tremendous change. He described those as the deluge of the world. He wrote:

"Nevertheless, as the deluge subsided and the waters fell, we saw again the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone."

I mean no disrespect to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) when I say that the steeples are still there. After all, there still are steeplejacks in Northern Ireland. With the steeples go what Churchill described as

"the integrity of an ancient quarrel."

That ancient quarrel brings us to the Floor of the House tonight. It was aptly described in the Unionist document "The Way Forward" in which it was said:

"The basis of this conflict lies in the ultimate political aspirations of the two communities and in their sense of national and political identity and the allegiance that goes with it . . . . The aspirations of the minority community is the incorporation of the territory of Northern Ireland into the State of the Republic of Ireland."

It added:

"The majority community is equally determined to maintain the position of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom."

The Secretary of State was more succinct when he referred to it earlier as an age-old problem of polarisation.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) referred to "The Way Forward" in his speech yesterday, in which he made a remark that hon. Members found curious. He said that he might not be returning to this place after his resignation. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not emulate the noble Lord Home who, having called a leadership election, declined to stand for that election. I believe that all hon. Members wish—certainly it is the wish of my hon. Friends and me—that, in the event that the right hon. Gentleman stands, and notwithstanding the vagaries of the electorate, we may see him back in the House.

The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley agreed that the main thrust of "The Way Forward" had been towards a United Kingdom in which Northern Ireland was appropriately integrated—thereby missing the opportunity to refer to an Irish dimension to which about 42 per cent. of the minority community aspired. He also put the view that the Anglo-Irish agreement had snuffed out "The Way Forward". He said that there was now no prospect of peace, stability or reconciliation.

I disagree with the right hon. Gentleman on that point, although I agree with his comment that only rights can be guaranteed, not aspirations. However, his quotation from the document, that the time was now ripe for those communities in Northern Ireland to realise that essentially their problems would have to be solved in Northern Ireland, sounded remarkably like the first part of article 4*(c)* of the Anglo-Irish agreement, which states:

"Both Governments recognise that devolution can be achieved only with the co-operation of constitutional representatives within Northern Ireland of both traditions there."

There appears to be no disagreement on the need for devolved government in Northern Ireland — only the route to be taken is in doubt.

The Secretary of State said that there should be no hindrance to devolution and that there were real prospects of it in future. Therefore, I respectfully suggest to my parliamentary colleagues in the Unionist parties that rather than consigning "The Way Forward" to the dustbin of history or otherwise, we should see how best its proposals can be married with those of the Anglo-Irish agreement. In short, where is the centre ground and how best might it be reached beyond the roar and the thunder of the rhetoric?

Although you may not think so, Mr. Speaker, "The Way Forward" quotes Edmund Burke:

"All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every value and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter."

Compromise and barter appear to be the key words, which is why, I presume, they were included in the document. "The Way Forward" also declares that unionists would have no objection to

"an Irish dimension in the form of a state recognition of the legitimacy of the fostering of distinctively Irish cultural activities in Northern Ireland."

That document cogently argued the case for a bill of rights.

The concept of an Irish dimension and a possible bill of rights are both embodied in the Anglo-Irish agreement under article 5(*a*), which states clearly:

"The Conference shall concern itself with measures to recognise and accommodate the rights and identities of the two traditions in Northern Ireland".

That includes cultural heritage, electoral arrangements, use of flags and emblems, the avoidance of economic and social discrimination and the advantages and disadvantages of a bill of rights for Northern Ireland.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) said yesterday, no harm would have been done had the Government spelt out their intentions to the unionist community last year, when pressed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West and my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), and their wish to seek to marry the proposals of the New Ireland Forum and those of "The Way Forward". If I may use a legal term, they are certainly not mutually exclusive. There is now an opportunity for that to happen. The thrust of the Anglo-Irish agreement is clearly towards devolution and power-sharing. That places the onus on the constitutional parties to bring that about, and provides the framework in which it can be done.

I say to my colleagues in the Unionist parties that resignation of parliamentary seats will not assist the process of achieving the aims set out in "The Way Forward"; that is rather the way back. It shows the insecurity of the Unionists, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith referred yesterday, that rather than seek to play their part as the majority community in Northern Ireland, and rather than seek to sit down and work out proposals that would enhance the welfare of their people in such areas as education, health, welfare and child care, and in the more mundane matters of planning and traffic management, they prefer to set aside those obvious and important gains to heighten the political temperature in Northern Ireland by election fever—a fever that will not infect the mainland and that will leave this House and Great Britain unmoved.

Ultimately, the day will come when Unionist Members are elected or re-elected to this House, possibly claiming that they have had a famous victory, but still having to face the Anglo-Irish agreement, still having to deal ultimately with the realistic prospects of devolution and power-sharing and still having to see how best they can promote the interests of Northern Ireland and their majority community as a whole.

One thing that has come out clearly from the debate is that no one wants the status quo. I cannot see the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) in his place, although I am sure that he is here somewhere. He declared that all should be equal in Northern Ireland. If one is to treat the minority right one must also treat the majority right. That is remarkably close to what the Taoiseach said. The hon. Gentleman said that he was striving in Northern Ireland for equality of status. Thus it would seem that there may be a meeting of minds on that subject.

Judging by the debate during the past two days, no hon. Member wants the status quo. The point was eloquently put by the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson). Yesterday he declared: if peace, stability, reconciliation and co-operation were achievable, he would grasp them with a heart and a hand. The hon. Gentleman did not, however, want to venture outside the Union. Nevertheless I congratulate him on the cogent and thoughtful way in which he put his party's case and, as he saw it, that of his electorate.

But if the status quo cannot achieve peace, stability and reconciliation, the House must ask itself what can. Earlier, the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) touched on that. There is no other agreement before us. The agreement signed at Hillsborough castle is the only one that we have that seeks to achieve what in the past has been elusive — notably, peace, security and stability in Northern Ireland. It is of course true that the agreement does not alter the sovereignty of Northern Ireland either in international law or in our courts. The status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom is not affected. But there is an obvious ambiguity in the status of the governance of its people.

The hon. Member for Belfast, East referred to the Downing street declaration of 1969 which declared:

"The affairs of Northern Ireland are entirely a matter of domestic jurisdiction."

Indeed, this Government's policy has been based on three specific and particular premises: first, that Northern Ireland will remain an integral part of the United Kingdom; secondly, that sovereignty will remain with the Parliament of the United Kingdom; and thirdly that arrangements for the government of Northern Ireland will remain a matter of agreement between the people of the North and the Government of the United Kingdom.

It is the erosion of that latter principle that has roused the ire of Ulster unionists. For in the case of the minority community this is no longer the case. It has a voice in the affairs of the North. That voice will be heard through Dublin. It will be heard through the consultative process which will, nevertheless, seek to work by consensus. It is in that process that there is hope for a minority to seek out its identity, to ease its sense of frustration and of sullen aquiescence in a state of affairs with which it has not, in the main, concurred since 1922. That is certainly how it is seen in the streets of Derry.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West referred earlier to our trips to Belfast and Dublin and, in my case, to Derry. I have spoken to Catholics in Derry there who are not members of any political party. They are all clear in their minds that the agreement should be given a chance. It must be given a chance by both communities. If it is allowed to work, it will halt the drift to Sinn Fein and ebb the flow of support for violence and terrorism.

Derry is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, with its sense of history, its wide flowing river and its pleasant location, but its border is as close as its history. On some Catholic estates the gable ends of houses enjoin the new generation of youngsters to join Sinn Fein. There are grilles on the windows of houses where adjoining Catholic and Protestant estates meet. People are constantly moving from one estate to another, sometimes to take their children out of the encroaching reach of the IRA and sometimes to be with fellow members of the community.

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

Much has been made of statis[redacted]—and rightly. A greater writer than I once said:

"any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind."

The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) quoted the same writer.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The first line is "No man is an island".

Mr. Bell: I am grateful for that help.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North referred to funeral processions. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) said that he had attended nine funerals in one day. The Prime Minister talked about three of our colleagues. My experience last week in Derry cannot match that of Unionist Members, but I was 50 yards from the home of a Roman Catholic who was cut down by the IRA. He left a widow and four children. On the day that I left Derry the man who did the catering for the UDR was shot dead by the IRA. He left five children. In my two days in Derry nine children were made orphans by assassins' bullets.

Death and destruction have no universal copyright, but the agreement, if it does anything, confirms that violence does not pay and that no paramilitary force can impose its will on the British people. The capacity for making widows and orphans is infinite, but as the Secretary of State said, we should seek to isolate the men of violence and to pursue the attack against terrorism more vigorously.

The enhanced border co-operation, while it may not reduce violence in the short term—a point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs)—should result in a weakening of the terrorist breeding grounds and a fall in terrorism itself.

Some would have us believe that no responsibilities or obligations fall upon the Dublin Government consequent upon the agreement. On the contrary, it places a heavy responsibility on Dublin, which is freely accepted and acknowledged by the Dublin Government, to redouble efforts to defeat terrorism. There can be no greater attribute to the agreement in the eyes of the majority community in Northern Ireland than a diminution of violence.

The Opposition will look at the agreement and its implementation at a variety of different levels. We shall consider security as it affects the prison system, policing and strip searching, to which my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition referred yesterday. We shall also consider the agreement at the political level and in terms of industrial and economic policy.

We believe that the agreement not only presents a new opportunity for the two communities, but that it provides the House of Commons with an opportunity—through the questions that we can ask of Ministers across the Floor, through ministerial statement and ultimately through an interparliamentary tier—to assist the Government to fulfil their duties towards Northern Ireland. We can do that not only in terms of the Intergovernmental Conference, but in terms of domestic policies for health, education and social services.

The Minister of State could have fooled me yesterday with his near description of himself as a neo-Keynesian. I know that he has a deep compassion for the Northern Ireland people, but his policies are Government policies and therefore monetarist. In the last six years those policies have not assisted the economic development of Ireland.

One of the terms of the agreement is that the two Governments should undertake to co-operate to promote the economic and social development of those parts of Ireland which have suffered most severely as a result of instability.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West touched on a variety of economic aspects—a common transport policy, capital projects, the gas industry, airline routes between Belfast and Dublin, hospitals, and even the Divis flats. The Secretary of State, in his previous jobs, argued that the only way to create jobs was to cut wages. I hope that he has left that ideological baggage at Heathrow airport. If the argument was false for Britain, it has been even more false for Northern Ireland, where low wages are a major cause of its economic problems. The worst damage that the Government can do to Northern Ireland is further to undermine its self-confidence and economy by telling the workers there that wages must be reduced if they are to price themselves into jobs.

The right hon. Member for Torbay (Sir F. Bennett), in a speech to which I listened with great care, referred to the speech yesterday of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn, and my right hon. Friend's correlation between economics and violence in Northern Ireland. We expect and shall seek to put the Northern Ireland economy on the agenda of the House, with or without the support of Ulster Unionist Members.

Many parliamentary colleagues have followed the two-day debate with the utmost interest. I feel sorry for many of them who have sat for many a long hour without being called to speak. Many have listened carefully to the speeches to make up their mind whether to support the motion. They will have heard my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn, my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West restate Labour party policy as it relates to Ireland. Today my right and learned Friend stated it as clearly as it could be stated when he said that we believed that the future of Ireland should be as one country.

If the Labour party believes in an Ireland united by consent and peaceful means, we must ask ourselves how that unity can be achieved, other than by giving the minority community an expression of its identity. How can peace be brought about, other than by a rigorous and fundamental attack by the Governments of the Republic and the United Kingdom on the breeding ground of alienation that spawns violence and gives an upbringing to the men of violence?

The agreement is a modest step in that direction. If the Labour party believes in a united Ireland, how do hon. Members who propose to abstain or vote against the motion tonight convince the wider British public and the wider Labour movement that the party has a genuine conviction in a united Ireland, when even the most modest proposal to seek to give the nationalist community a sense of identity, is not considered worthy of support?

We want a massive majority for the agreement, not because it is bipartisan, but because it is right for the people of Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the ultimate aspirations of the Labour party.

Yesterday my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn was graceful in his praise of the Prime Minister. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West was graceful in his congratulations of the Taoiseach, the deputy leader of the Irish Labour party and the Irish Foreign Minister. He left from his praise the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), but he needs no pearly words from me. He is well able to fend for himself. This year he was described in the House of Representatives as

"An advocate of peace, an advocate of non-violence, an advocate of political participation by all peoples in their society."

The words used in the Congressional Record are a fitting record of his attitude, and go to the heart of the fundamental dilemmas which all who live in Northern Ireland face. His address states:

"We cannot solve problems of difference by creating divisions. We cannot create peace by using violence. We cannot protect civil rights by attacking human rights. We cannot secure justice by abandoning the rule of law. And we cannot achieve freedom by inflicting injustice."

I wish to address a few final words to those who oppose the Anglo-Irish agreement. I say to them in all sincerity and modesty that they should not be caught by the low tide of history or be bound in the shallows and miseries of another 62 years of death, destruction and alienation. They should not destroy the fabric of a society that has so much to offer, where people wish to live their lives in peace and stability with hope for their future, and that of their children. They should help to build a society where the walls need not be painted with graffiti that asks the young people to join terrorist organisations as a way of expressing their identity in the community in which they live. History will not thank those who fail to catch the tide. The Labour party is prepared to support the Government and we commend the motion to the House.

9.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I apologise to those right hon. and hon. Members to whose speeches it will be impossible for me to refer. However, I echo the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) about the quality, passion and depth of feeling which all too rarely permeates debates but which has characterised these two days of debate. There have been some exceptions, but overwhelmingly the speeches have been constructive, have expressed genuine worries and fears and have been within the bounds of constitutional and democratic politics.

Nobody can serve for more than four years as a Minister in Northern Ireland without recognising the courage, resilience and endurance of the people of Northern Ireland, of both communities, in the face of the most vicious and sustained terrorist campaign. The respect that we extend to the people in the communities in Northern Ireland reaches out to their elected representatives in the House. They are entitled to our respect because of the unique burdens that they have to bear in representing that divided community so riven by terrorism. It is right that we should give weight to their opinions—perhaps disproportionate weight—because of the burdens that they bear and the experience that they have.

However, at the end of the day, it is for the House to take a decision for the United Kingdom as a whole in the interests of Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom. We do that facing the reality that Northern Ireland is a divided society and that that divided society is caused, at least to a substantial extent, by fears felt in the two communities. The fear, which we have heard expressed over the past two days, in the unionist communities is that some day they may, without their consent, be denied their Britishness and excluded from the United Kingdom. The fear of the nationalist communities is that they may be in a part of the United Kingdom where they may feel that their views are not reflected in the decision-making process.

The agreement seeks to address those twin fears. The fears of the unionists are addressed by guarantees about the status of Northern Ireland and the recognition that at the moment there is no consent for any change in that status. The fears of the nationalist community are addressed by establishing a unique structure — I confess that it is unique — in the form of the Intergovernmental Conference which, short of the move to devolution that we all seek, will provide for the reflection of nationalist views to the British Ministers who will have to make the decisions on matters affecting life north of the border, while it remains for Irish Ministers to take decisions affecting matters south of the border.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and others have asked questions of detail about how the conference will operate. It is impossible to anticipate in detail how the body will get off the ground and develop its work, but right hon. and hon. Members will know that the initial programme for the first meeting is set out in the communiqué. I understand—I think that the House will support me in this—that it concentrates at the beginning on matters affecting law and order, especially relations between the minority community and the security forces, enhancing security co-operation between the two parts of Ireland and underlining public confidence in the administration of justice.

That point reflects at least one of the concerns of the right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West as it includes a commitment to pay special attention to the parts of Northern Ireland that have suffered socially and economically during the troubles of the past 16 years.

Some hon. Members expressed worries about secrecy and about the conference conducting its business without informing the public. The Government are giving the most careful consideration to how, in a constructive way, there can be a public account and discussion of the conference's work as it develops.

The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), in an important and wide-ranging speech, mentioned the parliamentary body. It is clear in the agreement that if it is the will of both Parliaments to establish such a body, the Governments will support that. It is, however, inconceivable for Governments to launch a body designed to reflect parliamentary opinion. The will for such a body must come from both Parliaments. If they decide that that is the direction to take, the Government will certainly support that aim.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) vigorously demanded an assurance that decisions affecting Northern Ireland would remain the responsibility of Ministers in the House. To that I can only say, "Yes, yes, yes." It is reiterated time and again in the agreement, and it has been reiterated in the House by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State. If it needs to be said again, I say it now. Decisions affecting Northern Ireland will remain with Ministers responsible to Parliament.

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

The hon. Member for Antrim, North raised a point which was alluded to by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) about the Ulster Defence Regiment and the proposal for RUC men to accompany UDR patrols. That is not something unique to the UDR. All military patrols which are likely to come into contact with the public will, where possible in future, be accompanied by members of the RUC. It may not be possible to do that in all circumstances — but I shall write to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds about that.

There cannot be much doubt that this extension of police primacy in Northern Ireland is desirable. Policemen are trained in contact with the public in a way that, no matter how carefully one may devise a soldier's training, soldiers can never really be.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds raised a number of points about the Royal Ulster Constabulary. I shall make the present situation abundantly clear. Operational matters are matters for the Chief Constable. It is clear from the agreement that they will remain his responsibility. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have responsibility for providing the framework of resources, administration and general policy within which the RUC operates. There is no question of the Government interfering with operational judgment. I do not interfere, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not interfere, and the Conference will not interfere with the operational judgment of the Chief Constable.

I understand the pressures on the RUC and its worries as the agreement comes into effect. I shall be meeting officers of the Police Federation in Northern Ireland on Friday to discuss those worries and to reassure them. If the RUC needs additional resources or protection for the families of its members in the light of developments, they will be made available.

I have heard no suggestion so far from Unionists who have spoken in the House — although they have complained about the agreement and said that they will vote against it—that they will turn to action which will put pressure on the RUC on the streets of Northern Ireland. I hope that the unionists will stick firmly to their resolve to follow a constitutional path.

Now is perhaps an appropriate time to pay the warmest of tributes to the Army, including the UDR, and to the RUC, for the burden that they endure, day by day and night by night in Northern Ireland, in defence of both communities.

Mr. Julian Amery (Brighton, Pavilion): As I understand it, perhaps the most important aspect of the agreement is the co-operation in security that we hope to achieve. If there is a difference of opinion between the GOC or the Chief Constable and the Irish representatives, what assurance can the Minister give that the GOC or Chief Constable will not be told, "Dublin does not like this very much—can you modify your view?" Is my hon. Friend absolutely sure that we can sterilise the opinions of the GOC and the Chief Constable?

Mr. Scott: The GOC and the Army in Northern Ireland operate only in support of the civil police. It is the Chief Constable who makes operational decisions. I have said this before, but I will say it again if it helps. There is no question of any interference by Ministers or by the Intergovernmental Conference in the operational judgments of the Chief Constable.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Sir H. Atkins), with all the authority that he holds as a former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, agreed with us on the merits of the accord. He also urged us—I believe that this is important—to cast our eyes forward rather than back. Too many speeches in this debate have, at least in part, looked backwards to the constitutional history of Northern Ireland and to the developments that have led to the present situation. If the agreement is about anything, it is about a chance to look forward and a fresh start in tackling the many problems that face us.

I shall not, therefore, follow the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. McCusker) through the constitutional history of Northern Ireland. I shall, however, deal with the point that he raised about Orders in Council and other measures. The hon. Gentleman suggested that these would be put to the House only with the imprimatur of the Intergovernmental Conference so that he and his fellow Members of Parliament from Northern Ireland would be redundant and ashamed to take their places in the House.

The Intergovernmental Conference will, of course, have the opportunity to comment on draft Orders in Council, just as other bodies comment now when such orders are published. Ministers take advice and comment from a wide range of sources. The Intergovernmental Conference will have no privileged position in respect of Orders in Council or other proposals. We shall listen to its views, but we shall listen just as attentively to the views of the Assembly and to other views that are put forward. I repeat that at the end of the day, however, the decisions will be taken by Ministers who will be answerable to this House and to this House alone. The same will apply to other processes.

Mr. Nellist: How will the agreement contribute to political stability in the North when it simultaneously offers no solution to the national question, the partition of Ireland 60 years ago—*[Interruption.]* I have waited two days to ask this question. The agreement offers no solution to the massive unemployment, poverty and bad housing which provide a breeding ground for sectarianism and it simultaneously heightens the fears and suspicions of Protestant workers, thus increasing the poison of sectarianism and the risk of civil war. Does not the Minister see the possibility of the failure of this agreement leading to Belfast becoming the Beirut of Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland the Lebanon of western Europe?

Mr. Scott: I am astonished at the arrogance of the hon. Gentleman. The agreement has been signed by the Taoiseach, both of whose parents were in the Post Office in Dublin in 1916, for what that is worth, and whose nationalist credentials are better than those of the hon. Gentleman. It also has the support of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) who has been at the coalface of the nationalist cause in Northern Ireland through these troubles. Yet the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) dares to stand up and put his view against theirs.

In this agreement the cause of the unionists and their voice will not be silenced; their voice will be listened to. I suppose that is a hopeless task to seek to reassure the unionists about what is in the agreement for them, but

there is much of it for them in terms of the guarantees about the status of Northern Ireland, the phrases about consent and recognition and the guarantee that there is no derogation from the sovereignty of the United Kingdom. The Republic of Ireland has declared its intention to accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism.

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): When?

Mr. Scott: This will improve the chances of extradition, which has long been a bone of contention for Ulster Unionists, and improve cross-border security, for which we all long.

Mr. McCusker: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Scott: I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not giving way. I have already done so twice.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and the right hon. Members for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) and for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) said that central to the success of this agreement will be the improvement in security co-operation. I do not imagine for one moment that that will happen overnight, but this agreement, if it wins the support of the nationalist people of Northern Ireland—I was much encouraged by the remarks of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume)—will lead to the development of security co-operation.

Security co-operation on the border is good. Indeed, the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) said that there was a terrific working relationship on the border in parallel operations. That is good, and perhaps even that can be improved. However, that is not the sole aim of this agreement. I envisage, over a period of years, the two police forces and the two Governments in Ireland gradually taking a strategic view about how to grind terrorism down by denying the terrorists freedom of movement and of men, money, guns, explosives and the advantages of the border which they too easily exploit. There is a commitment by both Governments in this agreement to set their hands to this programme of work.

This is the only way to defeat the IRA—through tactical operations, day-by-day and week-by-week co-operation. If we can pull together both parts of Ireland in a sustained and developed way, we shall finally be able to defeat the men of violence.

There is no question, although I have heard sedentary interventions from Unionists, of their voices being ignored. Our reactions to the Assembly since it was set up—it is a wholly Unionist body—our responses to its reports, and our reactions to its comments on draft proposals for legislation have shown that we have sought to be sensitive to its views about legislation. That will continue, and I urge Unionists to continue to ensure that their views are expressed, through this House, the Assembly, councils, boards and committees in Northern Ireland. The Unionists should use those channels to express their views, for they will be listened to by those of us who have responsibility for taking decisions in Northern Ireland. The views of the Unionists are likely to be predominant because of the balance of population.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The Minister was referring to the Unionists using the Northern Ireland Assembly. Is he suggesting that they will be the only users of that body, or has he had an assurance that the SDLP will become involved?

Mr. Scott: Even when, as I hope, the SDLP comes into the Assembly, the predominant voice within that Assembly will still be unionist because of the balance of population in Northern Ireland. While that body has been wholly unionist, Ministers have listened to it and reflected the views that have been expressed in it in their decision-making. We will continue to do so.

I appeal to nationalists and unionists in Northern Ireland. This agreement can bring great benefit to Northern Ireland, given the chance. It has behind it the commitment and determination of the British and Irish Governments. It also requires the nationalist community leaders—I address this particularly to the hon. Member for Foyle — to respond with generosity, spirit and imagination to the great opportunities which this agreement gives them. Old grievances must be put aside. I know how hard that may be. It requires the nationalists to participate positively and directly in the political process in Northern Ireland. They must make their contributions to help the security forces gain the confidence and trust of all sections of the community. Article 7 of the agreement prefigures some of the ways in which they can do this.

Mr. Stanbrook: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Scott: Only if they do can we hope for the development of that mutual respect and mood of reconciliation which is the only long-term——

Mr. Stanbrook: Why not?

Mr. Scott: —and lasting guarantee of peace and stability in Northern Ireland. I was much encouraged by the views expressed yesterday by the hon. Member for Foyle——

Mr. Stanbrook: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Scott: —but it is right that the House should look to him to translate his words into action in the immediate future.

Mr. Stanbrook: There are six minutes left.

Mr. Scott: The unionists are the majority in Northern Ireland and their views will not be ignored. In the House, Members of Parliament will judge the interests of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanbrook: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. May I now ask him the question that I asked earlier and to which there has been no reply? Does the agreement bind the Republic of Ireland or only the current Government of the Republic of Ireland?

Mr. Scott: The agreement is a treaty. In common parlance, it is a written international agreement between states intended to create rights and obligations between them. It is governed by international law, and a treaty. It is fully and effectively binding when it comes into force. When the two governments exchange notifications under article 13, the document will be a valid international treaty and agreement. I am not a lawyer, but I have to disagree with my hon. Friend's judgment. It is a treaty and fully binding in international law unless abrogated at the time of review or by either side in the interim. I can set at rest my hon. Friend's fears on that score.

[Mr Scott]

May I tell unionists that Ministers, whether considering plans for devolution, measures for the security of Northern Ireland or measures about the identity of the two communities in Northern Ireland, will be determined to maintain a fair balance and to work even-handedly. When I arrived in Northern Ireland four years ago, we were in the middle of a hunger strike. Shortly afterwards, the Rev. Robert Bradford, an hon. Member, was murdered and there were acute tensions in the community in Northern Ireland. During those four years, there has been sure and steady progress, politically with the work of the Assembly and on the security front with the steady reduction in the level of terrorism—although it is still unacceptably high—as a result of the activities of the security forces. Despite the high level of unemployment, there have been improvements in the economic situation and there has been a steady return to the Province of the sporting, cultural, business and other activities which mark the normality of that part of the United Kingdom.

I ask the House and unionists to judge, please, the benefits that have accrued to families in Northern Ireland, Catholic and Protestant alike. The agreement imposes no solutions but provides a framework and a practical working solution to relationships between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Must this be put at risk for a new period of instability? Cannot unionists use the available machinery rather than risk that instability?

If we fail in this work, only the men of violence will have any success. If we are able to succeed and if everybody in the House is prepared to give the agreement a fair wind, there is a prize. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) asked us to remember the people of Northern Ireland. We do remember the people of Northern Ireland. We know that we can provide no greater gift than their being able to live at peace in their habitations.

I trust and believe that this agreement will give Northern Ireland stability and increased understanding between the communities, which is essential to its future. Both communities will have to feel that they have equal status and equal opportunity to contribute fully to the affairs of the Province. The agreement is an important step in that direction, and I commend it to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 473, Noes 47.

Division No. 12] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(N Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bellingham, Henry
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blair, Anthony
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Adam
Butterfill, John
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(N Luton)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dorrell, Stephen
Dubs, Alfred
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Ewing, Harry
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fisher, Mark
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forrester, John
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Mr. Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*

Holt, Richard
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Jessel, Toby
John, Brynmor
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ronald
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter, *(Fareham)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Milis, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, John
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Park, George
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patchett, Terry
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abdgn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rowlands, Ted
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stevens, Martin *(Fulham)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(N Hertf'dshire)*
Stokes, John
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Budgen, Nick
Clay, Robert
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dalyell, Tam
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Farr, Sir John
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Gow, Ian
Kilfedder, James A.
Lamond, James
McCrea, Rev William
McCusker, Harold
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Maginnis, Ken
Maynard, Miss Joan
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nellist, David
Nicholson, J.
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Porter, Barry
Powell, Rt Hon J. E. *(S Down)*
Redmond, M.
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*

Skeet, T. H. H.
Skinner, Dennis
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. William Ross and
Viscount Cranborne.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Anglo-Irish Agreement (Cmnd. 9657) signed on 15th November by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

10.17 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is a technical financial measure which simply increases the current limit of £1,000 million on the total amount of loans that may be outstanding from the national loans fund to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. I shall briefly explain the need for the Bill, but if right hon. and hon. Members have questions to ask, I shall be glad to reply if I have the leave of the House to speak again.

All expenditure on transferred matters in Northern Ireland is financed out of the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. The fund has two parts—a current account and a capital account. The current account is used for all the expenditure voted by Parliament in appropriation orders, together with certain other standing services, and is funded mainly by Northern Ireland's share of United Kingdom taxes and the grant in aid. The capital account—which is all that I am asking hon. Members to consider tonight—is partly financed by borrowing from the national loans fund, and it is with that borrowing that the Bill is concerned. The money borrowed is for on-lending to public bodies outside central Government for authorised capital expenditure. The principal recipients are the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Northern Ireland Electricity Service, district councils and voluntary schools. The House is I am sure fully aware of the importance of such investment to the economy and life of Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland (Loans) Act 1975, which the Bill amends, originally provided a ceiling of £800 million on loans to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, with provision for an increase of £200 million by order. It is the invariable practice in the case of loans from the National Loans Fund to impose such a ceiling, with the intention that Parliament should periodically have an opportunity for debates. As hon. Members are of course aware, loans from Votes are often different in this respect, since the annual Estimates procedure provides the necessary control.

The Bill has only one clause, apart from the short title. It sets a limit of £1,700 million on the total sums which may be outstanding in loans, and provides that the amount by which this limit can be raised, by order subject to affirmative resolution, may be £300 million. Any lending which brought the total of outstanding loans to more than £2,000 million would have to be preceded by further primary legislation in this House and in the other place.

These new limits are intended to ensure a debate once in the lifetime of a Parliament. The last such debate was on the Northern Ireland Loans (Increase of Limit) Order 1984, which took place exactly 52 weeks ago to the night, and the House will be interested to know that the initial limit in the Bill expected to last until the middle of 1990, and if the House then consents, the further limit is expected to last until 1992.

I make two points. Loans to Northern Ireland with which the Bill is concerned are not in any sense a subvention, since a full rate of interest is paid on them; rather they are a very proper use of resources to which Northern Ireland people themselves contribute by such means as the purchase of national savings bonds and certificates, premium bonds, and United Kingdom Government stock. Secondly, the Bill does not of itself authorise expenditure; it merely enables funds to be made available for capital expenditure which has already been approved.

Accordingly, although this is a technical Bill, it is part of the mechanism through which essential investment in Northern Ireland is financed, and I commend it to the House.

10.22 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I am sure that the Minister, in preparing to present the Bill to the House, will have familiarised himself with the proceedings on 28 November 1984 and that he will be in a position to respond to certain questions which were addressed to him on that occasion.

This debate has a certain paradoxical character following immediately upon the Northern Ireland agreement debate. It was a custom of the ancient Greeks to attach to each tragic trilogy a comedy in which the themes of the tragedy were treated again in a hilarious form. But it so happens that the Bill illustrates some of the methods by which the proceedings have been kept alive that led to the intergovernmental agreement to which the House has just, unwisely as will presently appear, given its approval.

I invited the hon. Gentleman, who was then much more green in office than he is today, to test this proposition when the occasion arose. He will remember that I asked him, rather than putting the parliamentary draftsmen to work upon a new Northern Ireland loans Bill, which is what the House has before it now, not to do anything at all. I pointed out to him that no disadvantage or loss whatever would be suffered by any interest in Northern Ireland if he did that. Indeed, there would be no alteration in the financing of those expenditures in any real economic sense.

I invited the Minister of State, when he had had time to familiarise himself with the background to this legislation and with the fictional character of the Northern Ireland Loans Fund and the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, to make a simple experiment: to float the notion, which would surely be popular in certain quarters, that no such legislation was necessary and that the Northern Ireland Loans Fund, like the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund, was a superfluity. I adumbrated for the Minister what his experience would be when, on arriving in the Northern Ireland Office the following day, he tried out this idea upon it.

I ventured to enlighten him that the resistance to any such proposition on his part and the desire to preserve the Northern Ireland Loans Fund and the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund was part of a very much bigger context in which the affairs of Northern Ireland were, as far as possible, to be kept separate from those of the rest of the United Kingdom so that in due course, when matters such as that which we have been considering during the last two days had proceeded several stages further, it might the more conveniently be possible to hive off Northern Ireland into that all-Ireland state which, in the first article of the

[Mr. J. Enoch Powell]

Anglo-Irish agreement, the Government have said that they are ready to introduce in the fullness of time by means of the necessary legislation.

I hope that if in due course the Minister of State takes my advice he will obtain the leave of the House to recount his experience when he makes this experiment in the Northern Ireland Office. I hope also that he will verify that there is no practical effect upon the financing of expenditure, capital or otherwise, in Northern Ireland which results from the maintenance either of the Northern Ireland Loans Fund or of the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund but that they are purely a means of maintaining an artificial distinction between the financial mechanism of the Province of Northern Ireland and the financial mechanisms of the rest of the United Kingdom which enable right hon. and hon. Members from other parts of the United Kingdom to offer the criticisms and observations which it is their duty to make.

I hope that we can look to the Minister of State for a contribution along those lines.

10.27 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has suggested that perhaps the most interesting characteristic of the Bill is that it marks a distinction between the financing of this part of the United Kingdom and the financing of the Province. He has suggested that the Bill will make it easier for the Government ultimately to hive off the Province. That is a mischievous interpretation of the Bill. It is utterly unjustified by the facts.

Above all, the Bill emphasises the commitment of this Government and this Parliament to the Province. The Bill once again extends the finance which this country and this Parliament give to Northern Ireland. It is a burden that we willingly undertake. *[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for South Down is making sedentary interventions. I shall give way to him if that is what he wants me to do.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: The hon. Gentleman evidently did not listen to the Minister's speech. He pointed out that the Bill imposes no real burden upon the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hogg: The right hon. Gentleman must not be too sensitive. I listened carefully to the speech of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, but I was concentrating upon the speech of the right hon. Gentleman. I thought that that was more to the point.

The right hon. Gentleman said that this is a mischievous measure: that it is designed to enable the United Kingdom Government to hive off the Province. But the right hon. Gentleman is being mischievous, for that is wholly and utterly untrue, as are many of the right hon. Gentleman's speeches in the House. He starts off with a false premise and he comes to a false conclusion. Contrary to the continuously expressed view of the Ulster Protestant majority as it is represented here, this House has continuously supported the Province, as has Her Majesty's Government, whose policy is enshrined in the accord. To try to give a twisted and perverted interpretation to the accord is to give no credit to the right hon. Member or to the Government's intentions.

The right hon. Gentleman prattles on constantly about loyalty and unionism. Those matters are reciprocal. Her Majesty's Government and the other peoples in these islands have consistently supported the Province for the past 10 or 15 years by money, lives and men. That is our intention and it is emphasised in the Bill. The obligations are reciprocal. We recognise our obligations, but I must ask whether the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues on the Ulster Protestant Benches recognise theirs. I think not, because if, as I suspect may be the case, we see a concerted attempt by the Ulster Protestant majority in Northern Ireland to frustrate the accord's purposes, people like myself will be exceedingly reluctant to support any further financing for the Province. In the end, loyalty is reciprocal. The right hon. Gentleman calls upon us to show loyalty and a sense of unity, and I say to him that the converse is also true.

Mr. Powell: If the hon. Gentleman refers to the speech that I addressed to the House about an hour or two ago, he will find a complete refutation of his observations. He will find that there is no obligation implied by membership of the United Kingdom to be governed by laws which are made separately for different parts of the United Kingdom without the consent of those parts of the Kingdom. While I am on my feet, I might as well tell the hon. Gentleman that I represent the Catholics in my constituency as well as the Protestants. This is not the Protestant Unionist party; it is the Unionist party.

Mr. Hogg: What the right hon. Gentleman said in the first part of his intervention was obvious poppycock. These matters are seamless. We cannot pick and choose as between a constitution. This Parliament has expressed its view as to the propriety of the accord——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We have finished with that motion. We have just had a Division on it. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address himself to the Bill whose Second Reading we are considering.

Mr. Hogg: I listened to the points you made, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should not dispute with you for one moment, but the Bill, about which the right hon. Gentleman addressed a few remarks with which I disagree, fortifies and emphasises the commitment that this Parliament and country have to the Union. It demands of Opposition right hon. and hon. Members a reciprocal obligation. That is the point that I am making.

The right hon. Gentleman is not entitled to misrepresent the Bill as being a part of a process of hiving off the Province. That is wholly and utterly untrue, and I regard such a contribution as being totally mischievous.

Mr. Powell: How does the hon. Gentleman know?

Mr. Hogg: Because I make a judgment.

10.33 pm

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): The Minister introduced this measure as a technical and financial amendment. For the obvious procedural reasons which prompted you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to rise to your feet about a minute ago, my remarks are an attempt to make many of the points that I wanted to make in the debate over the past two days. I was unable to do so, and I shall be guided in how far I can go now.

I regarded that debate and the financial ramifications of this debate as possibly the most serious two days that I

have sat in Parliament for the two and a half years of my membership. That is not to belittle this Tory Government's attacks over that two-and-a-half-year period on the miners, local councils, public ownership, health, housing or living standards. Most of the speeches to which I listened over the past two days, especially from my colleagues, seriously underestimated the effects that that measure will have.

I repeat the intervention I made to the Minister shortly before he sat down in the last debate. That agreement offers no solution to the partition of Ireland 60 years ago, to the economic problems, to which this debate is paramount, to housing, poverty and to mass unemployment.

Raising the fears and suspicions of Protestant workers will lead to an increase in the poison of sectarianism and increase the risk of civil war. Belfast could become Beirut and Northern Ireland could become Western Europe's Lebanon. That is emphasised by a passage from the UDA magazine *Ulster*:

"It is now generally believed we are heading towards open conflict in less than 10 years, when the future of Ulster for the coming centuries will be decided. Indeed, we may find it necessary to precipitate this crisis and take our destiny by the horns. The die is cast. There can be no turning back. We must prepare ourselves for the final conflict, a battle which we cannot afford to lose."

This is a financial debate. All the aspirations, fears, suspicions and all the sectarian divide that characterise Northern Ireland find their breeding ground in the conditions of unemployment, bad housing and poverty. We do not escape from those problems by discussing whether the Minister should be allowed a maximum of £1·7 billion with the offer of a further £300 million by order as a subvention to Northern Ireland.

The Anglo-Irish agreement, which is, in a sense, an attempt to deal with some of the political consequences of the Bill that we are discussing, has been hailed as a historic breakthrough which could lead to a solution in the north. It is no such thing. It is a cosmetic exercise which is doomed to failure—Elastoplast politics being applied to political gangrene.

The idea that an intergovernmental conference of blue Tories from Westminster and green Tories from Dublin could help to bring about stability is pure fantasy. If the conference made recommedations about the RUC, the UDR or the courts, there would be massive Protestant reaction. If, on the other hand, it offered nothing for the Catholics in terms of jobs, homes or economic measures, it would be seen as a talking shop and eventually would collapse. The entire agreement is a flimsy construction——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member heard me reproach other hon. Members for going beyond the limits of debate relevant to the Bill. I hope that he will bring his remarks more closely to the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. Nellist: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the advice that the Clerks have given you——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will observe the remarks that I am making.

Mr. Nellist: We are discussing, within the confines of an economic debate, the conditions of the economy in Northern Ireland. The primary reason why 1 million Protestant workers and half a million Catholic workers are perpetually at each other's throats is that nothing is on offer to unite them. In other words, nothing offers them conditions better than the conditions they suffer at present. They see nothing on offer that would give them a better life.

This measure seeks to increase the subvention to Northern Ireland from £1·490 billion in the last financial year to £1·7 billion in this financial year, with a possible £300 million more by order. Considering what was said in the earlier debate, it is clear that those sums are inadequate to deal with the levels of unemployment, poverty and bad housing with which I shall deal in detail later.

Dr. Boyson: This has nothing to do with the subvention from the Government to Northern Ireland of £1,400 million. The Bill is simply a borrowing requirement, and relates to whether we should borrow directly from the Treasury or have our own Consolidated Fund. It is nothing to do with money being switched. It makes not one penny difference which way we do it. It is a matter of choosing how we do it.

Mr. Nellist: It is an alternative, whether it is an increase or the same thing in different words. It is a large amount of money to try to deal with social and economic conditions. My contention is that, in view of the severity of those conditions, the Government's political and economic attempts to solve them are inadequate and, inevitably, will lead to increased tension and sectarianism within the community. That is the argument that I am trying to develop.

The subvention has risen over the past 16 years from £74 million in 1961 to £1,491 million in the last financial year. The additional cost of maintaining the Army in Northern Ireland has risen from £1·5 million in 1969 to £121 million today. During those 16 years, 2,500 people have lost their lives——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to have to reproach the hon. Gentleman again, but the money that is provided for in the Bill is for spending on domestic purposes and is not intended to be used for defence. It is out of order to refer to expenditure on defence in the context of this Bill.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. Are we allowed to discuss bad housing in the Province?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman catches my eye, I shall take his speech as it goes along.

Mr. Nellist: My reason for mentioning the 2,500 who have died and the 27,500 who have been injured — which, incidentally, translated into mainland Britain terms gives a death total of 90,000 and an injury total of 1 million — is that those injuries and deaths flow from the inadequate economic position of the majority of ordinary working people in Northern Ireland.

This measure is designed to increase, by a small amount, the Government money going to Northern Ireland. Surely, in arguing that that money is insufficient, I am allowed to describe the social consequences of that insufficiency. I shall give more detailed figures for unemployment and housing as my speech progresses.

In addition to the Government's estimates of the economic cost of Northern Ireland, one part of which we are debating now, the New Ireland Forum estimated that between 1969 and 1982 the additional security cost for

[Mr. Nellist]

compensation for deaths, injury and damage to property was £5,255 million, to which should be added the economic cost, such as lost output, of £3,680 million. For southern Ireland, the estimates totalled just over £2,000 million. That is a total over those 11 years of £11,000 million—which at today's prices, and adding the four years since 1982, must mean that the economic cost—and tonight's measure forms a part of the procedures to pay that cost—has risen to £16,000 million.

I contend that in a rational, sane, Socialist, united Ireland, freely and voluntarily federated to a Socialist Britain, much could have been done with £16,000 million to give hope of real jobs for the youths of the north and the south and to repair, renovate and modernise those inadequate homes—as common on the Shankhill road as they are in the Falls road area. What could have been done to lift the tens of thousands of people out of the helplessness and despair of poverty to which capitalism in the north and south of Ireland is increasingly condemning this generation? Capitalist division not only costs lives but brings poverty to hundreds of thousands of people, even though resources exist to guarantee a good future.

On a capitalist basis there is no attraction for the Protestant population in the north in reunification. Despite the subventions to the north, despite the money which has been given in similar measures, the workers in the north look to the south and see even lower living standards than they enjoy themselves. That is even when their region has the lowest living standards in the United Kingdom. They see that welfare provision in the south is even more abysmal.

The green Tories of the south have no real desire for reunification. Their speeches are about as honest as those by SDP members who called for Socialism at Mayday rallies. It is a diversionary tactic to try to deflect the anger at the economic mess over which they preside.

The last thing that the green Tories of Fianna Fail or Fine Gael want is a united Ireland with a million disaffected Protestants in the north—a minimum of 10 per cent. of them with access to shotguns or firearms—and a half million Catholics expecting a better deal, which they will not have as a result of tonight's vote.

The crisis-ridden capitalist system north or south cannot offer the one thing that could evaporate sectarian fears and make them irrelevant—a better life for all workers. For that, we need working-class unity with a political expression of its own. We need a party of labour, based on the trade unions, trades councils tenant and other community organisations as an alternative to the orange and green Tories of the north.

Much of our last debate was about constitutional issues. This debate is about economics in the north of Ireland. It is the poorest area of the United Kingdom. In 1984, the average manual wage was £134.20. In Great Britain, it was £152.60. Prices of basic purchases are 6 per cent. or 7 per cent. higher in the north of Ireland than on the mainland. That is despite the years of subvention.

In real terms, there is 35 per cent. unemployment. According to official figures, areas such as Derry have 29·8 per cent. unemployment and Strabane 39·1 per cent.

The same calculation can be made for the towns and cities of Northern Ireland as can be made for Birmingham, Coventry, Liverpool or London. We must add the make-work youth training programme and the women who are not allowed to claim benefit because they have not paid a full stamp. We must take into account how the Government have artificially reduced unemployment figures.

Mr. Parry: The troubles in the mainland's inner city areas are surely the direct result of the Government's economic policies. Liverpool in particular——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We cannot discuss unemployment in Liverpool or in any other British cities. This is a debate about expenditure in Northern Ireland and we must discuss Northern Ireland.

Mr. Parry: I am supporting my hon. Friend in his comments about poverty in Northern Ireland's inner cities. I am comparing them with my constituency, where unemployment is 30 per cent.

Mr. Nellist: My hon. Friend makes a genuine point. We cannot divorce the anger of youth in Brixton, Tottenham, Toxteth and Handsworth from their social conditions. Similarly, the ideas of racism that take hold of white youth in our inner city areas are bred from their social and economic conditions. The same point holds for Derry, Strabane, Belfast and other towns and cities in Northern Ireland where unemployment in real terms is more than 50 per cent.

The measure states that housing is the main area of expenditure. It is important to recognise that this money and the money pumped in, in previous years has still not got to grips with bad housing in Northern Ireland. The latest figures in the Library for an across-the-board comparision are for 1978. I know that there have been improvements since than, but in 1978 the percentage of houses with no inside toilet was 3·5 per cent. in London, 6·2 per cent. in Birmingham, and 24·2 per cent. in Belfast. The percentage of houses with no exclusive use of a bath or shower was 5·7 per cent. in Birmingham, 10 per cent. in London, and 23 per cent. in Belfast.

Sectarianism, like racism, finds its most productive breeding ground in such conditions of despair. However, poverty in Northern Ireland is non-sectarian. An earlier survey, conducted in 1976, shows that the percentage of houses without an inside toilet was 79 per cent. in the Shankill area and 55 per cent. in the Falls area. The percentage of houses without hot water was 81 per cent. in the Shankill area and 57 per cent. in the Falls area. Although some redevelopment has taken place, living conditions remain bad for many Protestant and Catholic workers alike. Marginal advantages for Protestant workers largely evaporated by the 1970s and certainly by the mid-1980s, when the misery is now common to both communities.

It is difficult for me to refer to the central question of partition, which I should have liked to raise during the debate on the Anglo-Irish agreement. In setting aside most of my notes that relate to that subject, I reject the argument that the division was a concession 60 years ago to the wishes of the majority population for home rule. In 1886 Randolph Churchill said that when Gladstone came to suggest Home Rule, the Orange card would be played. The economic, industrial and political importance of Northern Ireland lay in its deep water ports for the British Navy. That is why the north-east coast was retained rigidly by the ruling class of today. That is why we are debating this measure tonight.

The Anglo-Irish agreement, and this Bill which gives a slight increase in economic assistance to Northern Ireland, will never be able to solve the basic problems which afflict both communities. Even the Army admitted in a leaked document in 1979 that its methods, when set within the social conditions of Northern Ireland, would continually recreate new generations of republican activists. Despite the years of economic subvention, there have been 16 years of military presence, during which Army patrols, internment without trial, non-jury Diplock courts, supergrasses, plastic bullets, and draconian public order legislation have all be tried, mainly against the Catholic population. The Army has searched 310,000 houses in Northern Ireland since 1969. Bullets cannot solve the political and economic problems of Northern Ireland. This is not to say, as was said earlier on, that I am a supporter of individual terrorism. The methods of the Provisionals in the north of Ireland have pushed many Protestant workers into the arms of the reactionaries from the Orange order and the UDA.

You may not be aware of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but last Saturday, in the streets of Belfast, the Protestant paramilitaries were openly recruiting. The methods of the Provisionals have provided an excuse for successive British Governments to set up a repressive state apparatus, much of which costs money. More importantly, it has been used against industrial struggles at a later stage on the mainland.

Most of all, the methods of the Provisionals have cut across the task of building a powerful and united working class opposed to exploitation and repression. Workers throughout Ireland want the simple things about which this measure, in part, talks. They want jobs, decent homes and the end of poverty, repression, sectarianism and violence. Those objectives can be achieved not by passing the Bill but by reconstructing the political and economic foundation and basis of Ireland, north and south, and of Britain itself.

The only agency that can reconstruct the economic face of Ireland and Britain is the working class. There was a spontaneous revulsion of workers in Derry, Newry and other towns that led to partial general strikes and demonstrations against sectarian killings in 1975. In 1976 there was a rebirth of Labour movement organisations such as the trades councils, and the formation of a trade-union organised "Better Life for All" campaign. The workers' organisations crushed the attempt of the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) to repeat the Ulster Workers Council lock-out in 1977.

The mood of most workers is still against the paramilitaries, but the trade union leaders of 1985 have so far failed to build on the growing stirrings for class unity by creating a party of labour. That task now assumes a crucial urgency. A Socialist alternative to both the previous debate and the Bill, with all its inadequacies, is not just another or a different approach to the problems of the north. It is the only realistic alternative.

The common miseries and common class interests of the workers in the north provide the only material basis for a challenge to the ideologies of unionism and nationalism, and for the unity of Catholic and Protestant workers. Socialist policies — the public ownership of major industry under workers' control and management — would establish the framework for a planned recovery from the devastation of monetarism, not only in the north but in the south and internationally. It would facilitate the lowering of the retirement age, the shortening of the working week and other measures to end unemployment.

Such polices would make possible a minimum wage of £115 a week, a crash house building programme and all the other socially necessary improvements to repair the destruction of recent years. The creation of a compaigning, Socialist party of labour in the north, combined with the breaking of the coalition by labour in the south, could lay the basis for the revitalisation of the working class through the island.

With the workers' movement taking on the bosses in tandem in the north and the south, there is a real possibility that the unification of the forces of labour would be created. Such a movement would challenge for the first time—

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it order that Tory Members should laugh and treat as a joke what my hon. Friend is saying about the serious problems in Northern Ireland? Is this not a disgrace?

Mr. Deputy Speaker The Chair deprecates sedentary interventions of any kind. I hope that the House will give the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) a fair hearing.

Mr. Nellist: The movement that I have described would need to be built against the ravages of the Government and of capitalism both in the north and in the south of Ireland. Such a movement would challenge, for the first time, the very existence of both sectarian states, posing the alternative of a united, Socialist Ireland in a voluntary and free Socialist federation of Britain and Ireland. It would be not a bond of exploitation, but a free and fraternal associaton.

Sectarianism, strife, death and destruction have plagued Northern Ireland for 600 years. Poverty, unemployment and bad housing have increased dramatically in the past decade or two. Workers' unity and Socialism could consign those problems to their final resting place—the dustbin of history.

11 pm

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), I sat in the Chamber today from 2.30 pm until 9.15 pm, but, even though I represent the oldest Irish community in England, I was not afforded the opportunity to give reasons or state a case for going into the No Lobby after the debate on the Anglo-Irish agreement.

I supported the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery)——

Mr. Deputy Speaker Order. A number of right hon. and hon. Members were disappointed at not having the opportunity to participate in the earlier debate. We cannot continue that debate now and I trust that the hon. Gentleman will address himself to the Bill before the House.

Mr. Parry: I wanted to explain the reasons for my vote because the press and the media can get the wrong angle when reporting why hon. Members go into the Aye or the No Lobbies. I was trying to make it clear why I went into the No Lobby.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman cannot do that on the Second Reading of the Bill that is now before

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

us. He must seek another forum and another opportunity to do so. I must ask him to address himself to Second Reading.

Mr. Parry: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am supporting the increase in the allocation of moneys for Northern Ireland and I wish to deal with social deprivation which my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East mentioned in his contribution. In the amendment which was tabled to the motion in the previous debate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is no amendment before us. The House is debating the motion that the Bill be given a Second Reading. The hon. Gentleman cannot seek now to discuss an amendment that was tabled but not selected for debate in an earlier debate, the proceedings of which the House has concluded. The hon. Gentleman must address himself to the motion.

Mr. Parry: I fully support the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East and the large allocation of moneys to improve the disgraceful housing conditions and to reduce the massive unemployment and poverty that unfortunately exists.

The Minister may have been to the press conference of the Town and Country Planning Association yesterday and seen the exhibition. He will have heard the claims that it is necessary to demolish the Divis flats. Housing is one of the major problems in Northern Ireland as it is in many of our inner cities. I hope that the Minister will accept that money should be injected into a proper housebuilding programme and that he will consider the demolition of the appalling Divis flats.

The Divis originally consisted of 12 seven-storey deck access blocks plus a 19 storey tower block built on the Sectra system. The Divis housed 795 flats and 2,833 inhabitants or bed spaces. Unemployment is more than 80 per cent. and by any stretch of the imagination that is horrendous. It is no wonder that there are problems among the young people who are roaming the streets with nothing to do. That is why they get into all sorts of mischief and trouble. It is estimated that 75 per cent. of the community is living below the average weekly wage in Northern Ireland and that some families, exist on the disgraceful amount of £20 a week. The Divis complex was described as Europe's youngest slum in 1971, even before construction was completed.

Those who live in the flats have experienced many problems. They have suffered damp-related illnesses such as bronchitis, asthma and influenza. There are those who have suffered from rat bites and hepatitis. Young children and babies have been known to fall from the balconies of the flats on the higher storeys and some have been drowned in the open sewers that are close by. There is 24-hour surveillance by the British Army cameras on top of the tower. The landlord of the Divis flats is the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. I understand that it wants to refurbish the slums, while 90 per cent. of the community want the complex to be demolished and replaced by decent housing.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will take up some of the issues that are raised in the press release and set out in the information that has been made available to hon. Members who are interested in Northern Ireland. The information has been provided by those who are not necessarily opposed to the Government's policies. The source is the Town and Country Planning Association.

I do not normally involve myself in Northern Ireland domestic debates, although I try to participate in Northern Ireland questions and the general issues relating to the Province. I voted in the No Lobby in the previous debate because serious answers must be forthcoming to the problems of housing, unemployment, poverty and deprivation, and the wish of some to see a united Ireland.

11.7 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) and for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) for contributing to the debate. They sat patiently through the previous debate, which spread over two days. I am glad that they chose to participate in this debate. I was interested to hear their deep concern about the domestic issues of Northern Ireland and about the border. I do not wish to wander from the Bill, but I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Riverside that, with his interest in such matters as the Divis flats, we would welcome his participation in our debates on the domestic affairs of Northern Ireland as well as those on the political affairs. I am sure that he will wish to contribute to them in future and we shall welcome any participation that he wishes to make. The same applies to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East, who spoke with some feeling and compassion and displayed his deep interest in the problems of Northern Ireland as they affect the border and those who live in the Province and spend their lives there.

I shall direct my attention to the substance of the Bill, which increases the limit on loans that may be made to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund from the national loans fund. We note that the new limit will be £1,700 million and that there will be power to increase that to £2,000 million by order subject to affirmative resolution. The House will know that loans to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund have been made since 1950 and are used to finance on-lending for capital expenditure by such bodies as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Northern Ireland Electricity service as well as the district councils.

A total of £920 million is already outstanding in loans to the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. According to the Northern Ireland information service, the increase of £780 million under the Bill will provide enough for Northern Ireland's requirements for about four and a half years. The powers to extend the limit by a further £300 million will be adequate for about two further years. The Bill does not authorise any increase in public expenditure. It merely enables the approved expenditure in Northern Ireland to be financed.

I note with some interest that the source of this Bill was the Northern Ireland (Loans) Act 1975 to which the Minister referred. That Bill had a Second Reading on 28 November 1975. I do not know how many Members present now were in the House then.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell I was.

Mr. Bell: That shows the right hon. Gentleman's longevity. He may be standing in a by-election shortly and we in the Labour party could offer him excellent advice on the techniques and procedures for reselection. We are

expert at it. The right hon. Gentleman and others who were present 10 years ago will know that the terms of borrowing in 1975 were not entirely different from present ones.

Loans from the national loans fund are the most important source of long-term borrowing by the Department of Finance for Northern Ireland. The Department also raises money by the issue of Ulster savings certificates, and the more local savings can be attracted, the less will be the call in the national loans fund.

Hon. Members will note that the people of Northern Ireland invest in national savings such as the National Savings Bank, premium bonds and in British Government stock. Northern Ireland therefore feeds itself as well as drawing from the national loans fund.

We realise that this Bill enables expenditure to be financed at some future date and has little to do with how those loans will be allocated. It may be useful to consider where capital expenditure ought to be made in the Northern Ireland economy. My hon. Friends the Members for Riverside and for Coventry, South-East drew attention to the housing problems in Northern Ireland.

The explanatory and financial memorandum states that the loans will be made to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the Northern Ireland Electricity Service and the district councils. We welcome expenditure on housing and pay homage to the Housing Executive, which has done much to eradicate bad housing. The problem of housing is always present whether in the north of England, Liverpool, or Coventry. Some people are dissatisfied because they feel that they are badly housed. Therefore, we hope that some additional expenditure will be directed towards alleviating housing difficulties in the major cities of Northern Ireland.

We welcome the loans to the Northern Ireland Electricity Service as Northern Ireland has one of the highest levels of energy charges in the United Kingdom. No loans will go to the Northern Ireland Gas Authority because of the Government's decision to close down its gas industry—there has not been the corresponding link, which we hoped for, with the Kinsale gas field.

We hope that some of the £780 million in loans will be invested in Northern Ireland manufacturing industries and the creation of jobs. I know the Minister sincerely wishes to create jobs in Northern Ireland. We would like to see a sharper attack on unemployment in the Province and hope that some of the £780 million will be used to create jobs.

We welcome this debate. It may have been a little wider than intended. It reminds me, as a barrister, of the exciting events of a trial within a trial which we often have in the courts. Somehow, we have managed to have a debate within a debate today. I commend the Bill to the House.

11.14 pm

Dr. Boyson: With the leave of the House, I should like to reply to the debate.

It is one year ago today that, in the early hours of the morning, I replied to a speech made by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) on this subject. I was confused about how the money was transferred, though not because of what the right hon. Gentleman said. To use a phrase employed by the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), I was a green Tory in regard to the transfer of that money then. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman meant the phrase in that way, however.

The right hon. Member for South Down and possibly the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) differ with the Government about integration and devolution. There has been a separate Consolidated Fund in Northern Ireland ever since 1921. It was established with a view to devolution. The Government still believe that Northern Ireland's special needs and problems can best be met by a devolved system of government. Not all right hon. and hon. Members accept that view, but every Government since 1921 have. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison) does not agree but thinks similarly to the right hon. Member for South Down. Nevertheless, that stance has been embodied again in the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 and the Northern Ireland Act 1982. They provide for a defined area of public finance in Northern Ireland—control of the Consolidated Fund for Northern Ireland—to pass, on devolution, to the control of a Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does not the fact that a separate fund has existed since 1921 show conclusively that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) is wholly wrong when he says that its purpose is to enable the Government to hive off the Province?

Dr. Boyson: I take my hon. Friend's point, but I do not want to start a debate that we have had before—I am sure that I would be ruled out of order. The fund is essential if the search for devolution continues. A separate Consolidated Fund must remain available for devolution to a Northern Ireland Assembly. That has been the intention since 1921. I have no intention of frustrating the purposes of the 1972 and 1983 Acts by adopting the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion of abolishing the fund. Merging it with the United Kingdom fund would remove any possibility of control of finance being devolved to local administration in Northern Ireland without more primary legislation.

The hon. Members for Coventry, South-East, for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) and for Middlesbrough mentioned housing, which is the biggest draw on the Consolidated Fund. For the past six years, the priorities of expenditure have been law and order, industrial investment for jobs and housing, which is much worse than in the rest of Great Britain.

There has been a 67 per cent. increase in the housing budget, which this year is £545 million. That represents a 250 per cent. increase in cash terms, as against the inflation factor, since we came to office. The amount of unfit housing has decreased from 14 per cent. in 1980-81 to 10·4 per cent. in 1984. A great deal has been done for housing in Northern Ireland. I am not trying to make a partisan point here, because I am sure that a Labour Government would have made the provision of better housing in the Province a priority.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) asked about the Divis flats. It is two years or more since I was there, but we heard this morning on the radio an item about the possible demolition of the Divis flats. What is the Government's view?

Dr. Boyson: The Divis flats do not come under my responsibilities in Northern Ireland.

[Dr. Boyson]

The hon. Member for Riverside mentioned the Town and Country Planning Association exhibition and the leaflet produced. I replied to yesterday's debate, so I was unable to attend the exhibition. I should be grateful if a leaflet were passed to me so that I could study it. I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman on that point.

The hon. Member for Coventry, South-East is a zealous believer in Socialism—one could almost say a naive believer. I do not mean that hurtfully; the last thing I would wish to do would be to hurt the hon. Gentleman in any way. The problem of the Province is not the lack of so-called public enterprise, but the lack of private enterprise. About 70 per cent. of expenditure there is simply Government money being recycled. The hon. Gentleman talked about the working class. I was privileged to be born into the working class. There is nothing wrong with that, and nothing especially honourable about it; it is simply a matter of the dance of the chromosones in any bed at any time.

My experience of working class people in Northern Ireland—green and orange—is that they are delighted when we get investment from anywhere. We heard the welcome news this week that Du Pont will build its most modern Kevlar chemical plant in Europe in the constituency of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume). It will provide 300 jobs. I wish that the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East would help us, not by smothering hon. Members with Socialist ideas, but by visiting America with us and encouraging American firms to invest in the Province.

Mr. Nellist: Is not the Minister reinforcing my point? The fact that twice as many people are unemployed as are employed in manufacturing industry in the north of Ireland, that about a third of a million are employed in service industries, and that about 70 per cent. of expenditure comes from the Government reinforces the point that capitalism, private ownership and private enterprise have failed to guarantee jobs, decent homes and futures to the majority of the working class in the north, and I would argue equally in the south.

Dr. Boyson: I must not be drawn into an argument with the hon. Gentleman, but I should say this: in a Socialist state, we could have 100 per cent. employment at any time, with work direction, wage limitation and conscription, which would remove 2 million or 3 million unemployed from the register. The important thing is to make goods at a price and with delivery conditions that people want. Whichever system is used, there must be some price mechanism. But I do not wish to argue with the hon. Gentleman or to give him nightmares that his ideas may be wrong in any way. It is getting late, and we all wish him a good sleep so that he can return refreshed to battle with us again tomorrow. We should miss the hon. Gentleman if he was not in the House with us.

Following that attempt at bipartisanship, I commend the Bill to the House and thank those hon. Members who have participated in the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Committee tomorrow.

NORTHERN IRELAND (LOANS) BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill, it is expedient to authorise any increase in the sums falling to be paid out of or into the National Loans Fund which is attributable to provisions of that Act raising to £1,700 million the limit imposed by section 1 of the Northern Ireland (Loans) Act 1975 and authorising the Secretary of State to provide by order for that limit to be further raised to a sum not exceeding £2,000 million.—*[Dr. Boyson.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the statutory instrument motions.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments &c.)

Consumer Protection

That the draft Pushchairs (Safety) Regulations 1985, which were laid before this House on 7th November, be approved.

Marine Pollution

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) (Amendment) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 6th November, be approved.

Dangerous Drugs

That the draft Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Modification) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 6th November, be approved.

Industrial Training

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 11th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Question agreed to.

St. Bede's School, Redhill

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

11.25 pm

Mr. George Gardiner (Reigate): I wish to raise on the Adjournment the urgent need for St. Bede's school in Redhill to be included at last in the capital programme for voluntary aided schools.

Academically, St. Bede's is an unusual institution. It is an ecumenical, comprehensive secondary school for boys and girls aged from 12 to 18. The school was formed in 1976 from two other schools—St. Joseph's Roman Catholic mixed school and the Bishop Simpson Anglican girls' school. There are approximately 1,140 pupils on its roll. It is a shining example of a joint venture in education by the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches. It is appropriate that we should turn our attention to that example after two days of debate on the cultural and sectarian divides in Northern Ireland.

St. Bede's school has proved successful and has been visited and praised by religious leaders and educationists from all over Britain and abroad. However, all its staff and pupils labour under a great handicap. They have to work in 14 separate buildings spread over three separate sites. The main buildings and six temporary hutted classrooms are in Carlton road, Redhill. The sixth form centre, craft and technology and music departments are in prefabricated buildings and huts the other side of a large playing field. Worst of all, second-year pupils are in a turn of the century building in Frenches road, one mile away from the main building.

I cannot stress too heavily the acute difficulties of having to operate over such split and widely separated sites. It means that 57 hours of staff time are spent each week moving between buildings. The difficulties were foreseen at the time of the school's foundation. In the section 13 notice published by the then Secretary of State in 1974, it was clearly stated that it was intended to bring the school on to one site within five years. That was 11 years ago. Since that time the school has grown larger, but repeated requests for inclusion in the capital programme for voluntary aided schools, with the full backing of Surrey county council, have been refused by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

As well as the difficulties presented by split sites, the buildings are grossly inadequate. First, there is the 80-year-old annexe in Frenches road, to which I have referred, a mile from the main building with the busy A23 road passing between. It is used to cater for the 224 second-year pupils.

The fact that there is only one science laboratory forces mixed ability teaching in those vital subjects and means that many science lessons have to be taught away from the laboratory in ordinary classrooms. It also means that laboratory staff have to carry chemicals to and fro from the main school because there are no secure storage facilities at Frenches road. The entire building is antiquated, to say the least. One hall has to serve as assembly room, drama department, gym and canteen. PT equipment has to be stored in one of the two classrooms opening directly from it. Girls returning from games have to change in an old, open cloakroom. Washing facilities are primitive and the lavatories are outside, and ancient. When I visited recently I found part of the hard playground and fire escape held up by temporary scaffolding in an underground boiler house. I wondered which was the greatest risk—fire or a call to fire drill.

Next, I direct my hon. Friend's attention to the three prefabricated buildings and two temporary huts at Colesmead, reached by pupils and staff having to cross playing fields from the main building. Those, too, are totally unsuitable for their present use. The need to site craft and technology here means total separation from the art and design work done in the main school. The separation of the music rooms—which in themselves are cramped—from the mainbuilding, makes it especially difficult to pursue musical activities after school hours.

As my hon. Friend will be aware, St. Bede's is unique in this part of Surrey in having its own sixth form, which is also one of the largest and strongest in Surrey. But the common room for sixth formers at Colesmead is the most primitive I have ever seen, in a building that can only be described as squalid.

And so we come to the main school buildings, in Carlton road, which suffer from severe design defects. The lack of a through corridor on either of the upper floors means that staff and pupils have to interrupt other lessons to pass through. Laboratory assistants use the fire escapes to service their laboratories. Almost all pupils are obliged to pass through the central entrance hall between lessons, causing severe disturbance to those sitting public examinations in the adjacent hall. The only secure place to lock the examination papers in accordance with the regulations laid down by the examination boards is in a lavatory.

The library is cramped for a school of this size, and has to be used by sixth formers for private study. That prevents younger children from being brought in as a class and taught study skills. Only recently the Surrey school inspectors reported critically on the way in which the school is able to use its library. There are, again, too few science laboratories. The staff room is small, and currently used by more than 60 staff. There is not the space to provide enough tables at which staff can prepare and mark work. All those difficulties, and more, in every one of the three split sites, impose terrible constraints on timetabling, and blight any further development of the curriculum, especially in technology.

Yet, as my hon. Friend will be aware, St. Bede's is an excellent school. It has been oversubscribed every year since its foundation. Earlier this year 270 applied for 210 places. Its academic achievements are high. To give just one example, in five A-level subjects last summer more than a quarter of candidates achieved A grades.

But that record of excellence cannot be made an excuse for refusing to St. Bede's the development on one site that was promised by a previous Secretary of State in the section 13 notice issued back in 1974. It has become urgent for the Department to honour that commitment, by including the necessary architects' fees and other consultants' costs in next year's capital programme for voluntary aided schools. I must tell my hon. Friend, too, that many of us see that as a critical test of whether the Government are sincere in their expressed support for the voluntary aided sector in general, and for advanced ecumenical education in particular. I know that that point was stressed to the Secretary of State when he met a delegation led by the Bishop of Southwark and the Bishop of Arundel and Brighton in June this year. In developing further the concept of ecumenical education, St. Bede's

[Mr. George Gardiner]

sets an example that others would be wise to follow, yet what encouragement is there for it to act—perhaps by making the best use, for the time being, of what scattered and unsuitable buildings are available to it—when it can see how a school that was promised development on one site 11 years ago is still denied any place in the capital programme?

Therefore I urge my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and, through him, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science to give substance to their words and give St. Bede's its long-promised place in their capital programme so that the school can develop on one site and enjoy the facilities appropriate to any good, modern comprehensive school.

11.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Mr. Gardiner) on obtaining this Adjournment debate on the voluntary aided capital programme and, in particular, the proposed building work at St. Bede's school. I am glad of the opportunity to reply. My hon. Friend has spoken eloquently tonight on behalf of the school, but this is by no means the first time he has raised this issue. His active and continuing support of the school typifies my hon. Friend's keen concern for the interests of his constituents.

My hon. Friend spoke of the problems faced by the staff and pupils of St. Bede's and the apparently anomalous position of the school in relation to the availability of capital resources. I shall endeavour to answer these specific points in a moment, but before I do so I should like to touch briefly on the general issues of national policy which underlie this question, since this background will contribute to an understanding of the position of St. Bede's school.

There are in England almost 25,000 primary and secondary schools within the state system, maintained by local education authorities who meet their running costs. Most of these — rather over two-thirds — are county schools, provided by the local education authorities. The remainder, known as voluntary schools, were provided by voluntary bodies — principally the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. This arrangement, introduced by the Education Act 1944, is known as the dual system. Voluntary schools make a very important contribution to the maintained sector of education. They bring variety to the provision of schools and they extend the range of educational choice available to parents for their children. The Government are strongly committed to the preservation of the dual system and the fostering of voluntary schools.

There are different types of voluntary school, but the largest category—to which St. Bede's belongs—is that of voluntary aided schools. These are distinguished from voluntary controlled schools—the next most numerous type — by the greater powers possessed by their governors and by the division of responsibility for certain capital building and repair work. In brief, the governors are responsible for external repairs and for the greater part of capital building work, and they are entitled to seek from the Department a grant of 85 per cent. of the cost to them of such work.

The funds available to the Department for disbursement to governors are not, however, unlimited. My hon. Friend knows that a fundamental element of the Government's economic strategy is the achievement of a sustained reduction in the rate of inflation. Only in this way can we generate the economic growth that is needed to underpin the provision of state services. In order to achieve this, it is essential that public expenditure must be limited. Expenditure on education, by both central and local Government, cannot be exempt from the need for restraint.

In distributing the resources that are available for the voluntary sector, priorities therefore have to be decided and choices—often difficult choices—must be made. I should like, if I may, to outline the approach we take here. Each year the Department invites all local education authorities to submit details of their plans for capital expenditure in the following year at the county and voluntary schools in their areas. In aggregate, these plans always exceed what the country can, in our view, afford. We are therefore faced with the difficult task of deciding between competing voluntary aided school projects. In doing so, our first priority is necessarily to meet continuing expenditure required for projects which have already started—committed expenditure, in other words. For the current financial year, governors' estimates of committed expenditure were considerably higher than earlier indications had given us to expect, partly because of "slippage" — work proceeding more slowly than scheduled—and partly because of unforeseen increases in the costs of certain, mostly large, projects. Short of asking governors of all schools with capital building projects to reschedule the work over a longer period—something which would be impracticable, costly and highly unsatisfactory for all concerned — we have no option but to programme all such expenditure, as there are no alternative sources of funding open to governors.

Having met committed expenditure, our next priority must be to programme new projects which result from published statutory proposals which have been approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State under section 13 of the Education Act 1980. They are normally of two kinds: either the proposal is to establish a new school which is needed to provide new places in areas of population growth—that is known as "basic need"—or it relates to a re-ordering of provision in an area where the school population is declining, perhaps by amalgamating two or more schools so that a proportion of the surplus places can be taken out of use. Approval of such proposals places upon the proposers a statutory duty to implement them by a specified date. If building is required in order to implement the proposals, it has to be programmed to avoid the risk of proposers being unable to fulfil that duty.

The third priority, after such "committed" and "statutory" expenditure has been allowed, is for work which, for convenience, I will refer to under the blanket title of "improvement". Projects of that sort include minor additions or extensions to existing school buildings, replacements of failing or unsatisfactory structures, such as outside lavatories or aging "temporary" accommodation, and work intended to bring a split-site school on to a single site. Regrettably, we are always faced with many more worthy projects in that category than can be accommodated within the available resources, and hard choices have to be made on the basis of the urgency of the need and the general condition of the school buildings in question. In making such assessments we draw upon the

views of the maintaining LEAs and, where appropriate, upon the expertise and experience of the Department's officials. We also have to bear in mind the implications of the projects in terms of capital expenditure in future years.

I should at this point perhaps clear up one possibly confusing point relating to St. Bede's. Since the school came into being as the result of approved proposals, there would be logic in the assumption that the building project to bring the school on to one site would fall into my second category of statutorily necessary work. That is not so, however, for the following reasons. The "duty to implement" which gives that category its high priority was introduced by legislation which took effect in 1976. approval of the proposal to establish St. Bede's predated that legislation. The result is that projects such as that at St. Bede's must fall into the third priority category of highly desirable projects which are not essential for statutory reasons.

Turning now to St. Bede's school, may I first acknowledge the way in which the school has successfully broken new ground? St. Bede's is one of a small but growing number of ecumenical voluntary aided schools. Those pioneering schools demonstrate that it is possible to combine Anglican and Roman Catholic education successfully in one institution. In many ways they are a pointer to the future, as the steady decline in secondary school rolls will increasingly face local authorities with the problem of the town with two aided schools neither of which is big enough to be viable but both of which attract justifiably strong support. The ecumenical solution can be a way of ensuring that the strengths of the two institutions are combined and of avoiding the lasting bitterness that can result from the invidious choice that must otherwise be made.

I fully acknowledge the strength of the school's case. Officials of the Department have visited St. Bede's, and we are in no doubt of the difficulties which pupils and particularly staff have to overcome every day. My hon. Friend also knows that the bishops of both the dioceses concerned have discussed the matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, and have conveyed forcefully the strength of feeling, locally and within the two churches, about the importance of giving St. Bede's the support it needs in its pioneering work.

All this is well understood. The arguments for St. Bede's are strong. Nevertheless, there is another side to the case. The cost of the project, currently expected to total more than £2·5 million, is substantial indeed. If the project were to start next year, it would pre-empt a sizeable proportion of the limited resources available for capital work at voluntary aided schools from now to the end of the decade. At a time when there are many dilapidated primary schools in sore need of attention at a relatively modest cost, the implications of committing such a large sum have to be weighed very carefully indeed.

That is not to say that St. Bede's will not find a place in the programme. I simply wished to make the point so that my hon. Friend and his constituents may understand that our inability to programme the St. Bede's project so far is not a result of perversity or ignorance, but a painful decision of the sort that must be taken when what is desirable exceeds what is possible. The allocations of capital expenditure at county and voluntary schools are currently under consideration and will be announced next month.

My hon. Friend will not, I am sure, expect me to give any assurances at this stage about the likelihood of programming the work at St. Bede's. He will, however, accept an assurance that I can give him. It is that the points which he and others have eloquently made will be fully taken into account before decisions are made.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes to Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 November 1985

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PROVISIONAL ORDER BILLS

LOTHIAN REGION (EDINBURGH WESTERN RELIEF ROAD) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Wednesday 4 December.

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 5 December.

NOTICES OF PRESENTATION OF BILLS

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR

Mr. Secretary Younger presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Fraserburgh Harbour; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Wednesday next and to be printed. [Bill 15.]

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR (No. 2)

Mr. Secretary Younger presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Fraserburgh Harbour (No. 2); And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Wednesday next and to be printed. [Bill 16.]

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR (No.3)

Mr. Secretary Younger presented a Bill to confirm a Provisional Order under section 7 of the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, relating to Fraserburgh Harbour (No.3); And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be considered upon Wednesday next and to be printed. [Bill 17.]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Johnson Matthey Bank

1. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set up a public inquiry into the Johnson Matthey banking affair.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): No. The City of London police announced this morning that its investigations had discovered evidence of fraud upon JMB in 1981, and a fraud investigation group has accordingly been set up.

Mr. Dalyell: Given this morning's developments, and given what the Bank of England, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Attorney-General knew, why did it take Ministers from October 1984 until July 1985 to call in the fraud squad? Why were they so tardy?

Mr. Stewart: It is not for Ministers to call in the fraud squad. I remind the hon. Gentleman of what my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in July when he made the announcement that a preliminary police investigation was to take place. He said that there was not, strictly speaking, prima facie evidence of fraud, even at that stage, although deficiencies of documentation created sufficient suspicion.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my hon. Friend aware that criticism of this wretched banking company is not confined to the Opposition Benches? Is he aware that many of us deeply deplore the great worry caused to many decent people working in the Johnson Matthey company as a whole? To preserve the good name of the City, will he ensure that the matter is pursued with the utmost rigour?

Mr. Stewart: I believe that the police, and the fraud investigation group that is now in being, will pursue the matter with the utmost vigour, but I am glad that my hon. Friend has had the opportunity to say what he has said.

Mr. Penhaligon: Does the Minister believe that the public have the right to express some outrage at the fact that offences in the City rarely appear to result in anyone going to gaol, whereas people are often successfully prosecuted for minor offences in their own community?

Mr. Stewart: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. It is an unfortunate fact that the standard of evidence required to obtain conviction in cases of financial fraud has to be very high. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry commented on that fact in a speech yesterday. As the hon. Gentleman will know, Lord Roskill has, with his committee, been charged with considering the conduct of fraud trials.

Mr. Tim Smith: Instead of constantly demanding inquiries into these matters, should we not be concentrating on the need to give fraud investigators much more power to obtain the evidence to bring to book the people concerned? Will the Government ensure that such powers are introduced in the Financial Services Bill?

Mr. Stewart: I note what my hon. Friend said. The Financial Services Bill is not a matter for the Treasury, but I am sure that note will be taken of what my hon. Friend said. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary said yesterday that further powers would be contained in the Financial Services Bills to assist investigators.

Mr. Sedgemore: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that all hon. Members will be pleased with today's announcement, especially if it leads to criminals being brought to book, and allows me to get on next week with investigating the Lloyd's scandal? Should not the Chancellor of the Exchequer come to the Dispatch Box to explain how he said in statements on 20 June and 17 July

this year that there was no prima facie evidence of fraud, yet parliamentary answers to me in the past two weeks have shown conclusively that the Attorney-General and the Bank of England could have advised him that those statements were untrue?

Mr. Stewart: I am glad to hear the hon. Gentleman's welcome for today's announcement. The statements in June and July by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor were absolutely true. Had prima facie evidence of fraud been available earlier, no doubt the whole process could have begun at that time.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does my hon. Friend accept that calls for a public inquiry have always been inappropriate, because an inquiry would have precluded the institution of criminal proceedings? Will my hon. Friend do what he can to ensure that the City of London fraud squad has sufficient resources to investigate frauds of this kind properly?

Mr. Stewart: The Government fully recognise that adequate resources are needed for the fraud investigation group. The proper way of investigating criminal offences is investigation through the police and not through a public inquiry—a point that was made clear not long ago by my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General.

Mr. Skinner: Should not the Chancellor of the Exchequer answer these questions? Is he evading giving these answers? He knows that full responsibility at the end of the day should fall on him because as far back as 23 October 1984 and 11 November 1984, when I specifically called for the fraud squad to come in, he and the Attorney-General were dodging giving the answers. Is it not a scandal that the parent company, Johnson Matthey plc, has been able today to announce a dividend of £700,000 for a few of its shareholders, but it refused to bear the burden of its errant child, Johnson Matthey Bankers? The parent company allowed the brat, Johnson Matthey Bankers, to make money and to become involved in fraud, yet it got off scot free. Is it not time that the Chancellor resigned?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That was too long.

Mr. Stewart: The Johnson Matthey group had to inject a large sum—£50 million—at the time of the rescue. It would not be in its present condition if it, in turn, had not had a very large injection of cash by its own major shareholder, Charter Consolidated.

Mr. Skinner: That is right: Charter Consolidated.

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman may not like the answer, but it is necessary to put the record straight. As for the allegations against my right hon. Friend, it behoved anyone at any stage in this story to make available for investigation any available evidence. Random allegations by the hon. Members for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) and for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) do not amount to evidence.

Mr. Cockeram: Does my hon. Friend accept that many of us are concerned about the Johnson Matthey affair, especially about the handling of the matter by the Bank of England? However, it is an abuse of the privilege of the House for hon. Members to make insinuations in the House, whether about colleagues in the House or persons outside, when they have every opportunity to take their evidence to the appropriate authorities.

Mr. Stewart: I hope that Opposition Members will note what my hon. Friend has said about their conduct.

Dr. McDonald: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the Government cannot be let off the hook as easily as that? Does not today's news underline the need for a full public inquiry, for which I called as far back as July and which the Prime Minister refused five days before the Chancellor's announcement of a fraud investigation? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that what is at stake is not just the issue of fraud, but, more important, the gross incompetence of the Bank of England in its supervision of the Johnson Matthey Bank and gross negligence by that bank? Will the hon. Gentleman ensure that a public inquiry is instituted into those aspects?

Mr. Stewart: Had the hon. Lady been listening earlier, she would have heard me answer her point by saying that the appropriate method for investigating criminal offences in this country is a police investigation, not a public inquiry. The hon. Lady can make any allegations that she cares to make about the behaviour and conduct of the Bank of England, but there is no obligation upon anyone else to do so.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of the Minister's reply, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment at the earliest opportunity.

Tobacco Products (Taxation)

2. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which factors he takes into account in calculating the extent to which public expenditure is to be funded by taxation on tobacco products.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): Many factors contribute to the Chancellor's judgment at Budget time in relation both to the overall amount to be raised in taxation and to the contribution to that of individual taxes, such as those on tobacco.

Mr. Brown: Is the Minister aware that the dumping of German cigarettes on the British market reduces the amount of revenue that is available to the Exchequer and also brings cigarettes within the price range of young people, to which both the Government and the British industry say they are opposed? Will the Minister say what steps the Government intend to take to prevent this abuse, or tell the House what alternative proposals he has in mind for raising revenue other than by the tax on tobacco?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman's latter point must be a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer at each Budget time. As for the hon. Gentleman's first point, whether or not there is evidence of dumping is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I am informed that there is no such evidence and that imported products are subject to the same excise duties.

Mr. Sims: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity to examine the statistics in the document entitled "The Big Kill", which was issued a couple of days ago by the British Medical Association? Does he agree that an increase in the duty on tobacco products, even if it produced a lower revenue for the Exchequer, would be money well spent on reducing disease and death and that it would reduce the £111 million spent each year by the National Health Service on dealing with smoking-related diseases?

Mr. MacGregor: The health factor is one among several that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer takes into account at each Budget time. However, I think my hon. Friend knows that the consumption of cigarettes has declined during the last five years by about 20 per cent. I guess that it is the perception of consumers about the health risk that has caused a decline in consumption.

Inland Revenue

3. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the current estimated savings per year from computerising the Inland Revenue; and if he will make a statement.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): Major computerisation projects should produce staff savings over the next three years of 350 by April 1986, a further 1,900 by April 1987 and another 2,200 by April 1988, making a total of 4,450.

Mr. Thurnham: Can my hon. Friend say whether this programme is running to schedule and when we can expect completion in the north-west?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend will be delighted to know — as, I am sure, will the whole House — that the computerisation programme is running to time and to cost. It is a good illustration of the excellent co-operation between the public sector and ICL on this contract. The expectation is that the computerisation programme in the north-west will be completed in August 1987.

Income Tax

4. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how the level of income tax threshold for the single man in the United Kingdom compares with equivalent thresholds in other developed countries.

Mr. John Moore: The United Kingdom tax threshold for a single person is close to the average for European Community and OECD countries as a whole.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his answer, but is it not a fact that in the United Kingdom people start to pay tax at a very much higher basic rate than is the case in other countries, such as the United States, where they begin at 11 per cent.? Does not the combination of high basic rates of tax and means-tested benefits result in a very high effective rate of tax on the low-paid, which results in increased unemployment? Will my hon. Friends therefore concentrate on cutting rates, rather than on raising thresholds, to deal with this problem?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that thresholds are only part of the story. Relative earnings are a key factor. My hon. Friend is also right to draw our attention to the starting rate. Hon. Members will be interested to know that, among our main competitor countries, the United States and Japan have a starting rate of 11 per cent. and France starts at 10 per cent., while our starting rate is 30 per cent. That shows that there is a clear difference in this area. That is unlike our average position on thresholds, where we are the second highest in the OECD.

Mr. Ashley: Can the hon. Gentleman assure the House that he will not be preoccupied only with single men when he considers tax thresholds, and that he will also take account of the problems of women and married couples? They have grave problems as well, especially those who are on low pay, and therefore need more help than those in the upper brackets.

Mr. Moore: I note what the right hon. Gentleman says. He will be aware that I was asked specifically about single men. I know that he will be delighted with the Government's record over the past three years of raising the tax thresholds by 20 per cent.

Sir William Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that single men start paying tax at 30 per cent. as soon as they earn £42·40 a week? Does he also agree that, as the national average wage is now well over £170 a week, this threshold is derisory and that the first priority for any tax cuts must be an increase in the threshold?

Mr. Moore: I know that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor is listening with great care and will consider that point when drawing up the Budget for 1986. The point that my hon. Friend was seeking to make was that both thresholds and rates can be a deterrent to the work ethic.

Mr. Blair: Before the Financial Secretary gets carried away by the prospect of tax cuts, will he admit that were it not for the sale of £5,000 million worth of assets and special assets, as well as other sales, last year alone, the Government would be talking not about cutting taxes but about raising them?

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman is aware that the Government's ability or inability to raise taxation is a reflection of their overall ability to run a successful economy.

Economic Progress

5. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer which economic indicators confirm his assessment of the progress of the economy.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): Inflation is currently 5·4 per cent. and will continue to fall. Growth of national output is likely to be 3½ per cent. this year and is forecast to reach a further 3 per cent. next year. The number of people in work has risen by some 600,000 last year and is expected to go on rising.

Mr. Dubs: When will the Chancellor stop deceiving the British public about the economy? Does he not agree that, compared with 1979 when the Conservatives took over, output and employment are down, and the only thing that is up is unemployment?

Mr. Lawson: The hon. Gentleman has obviously forgotten that during the earlier period of this Government's office there was the worst world recession since the 1930s. Since then, we have had the strongest recovery that the nation has had since the first oil shock. Living standards are at an all-time record level and so are manufacturing exports and productivity, national output and investment. Those are facts.

Mr. Forman: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to spell out to the House and the country the

extent to which the excellent prospects for inflation and improving prospects for employment would be vulnerable to another take off of unit pay costs?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. Among the threats to our economic success, one of the biggest is an excessive rise in unit labour costs. As it is, unit labour costs are rising more rapidly than those of our major competitors, some of which have had a slight fall in such costs.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Has the Chancellor seen the latest quarterly survey from the Manchester chamber of commerce and industry? Is he aware that it points out that there will be an especially sharp fall in manufactured exports as a result of the high exchange rate? The Manchester chamber of commerce and industry knows little about monetary matters and other such factors, but it does know something about the state of its members' order books. Will the Chancellor listen to what is happening to industry, rather than listening too closely, as he does, to what is happening in the City of London?

Mr. Lawson: I listen closely to the voice of industry and to what the CBI has to say. The right hon. Gentleman will know that the most recent CBI survey showed a further growth in manufacturing exports and manufacturing output in the coming year.

Mr. John Browne: Does my right hon. Friend accept that with the entry of the main player — the United States — the group of five's concerted action in the foreign exchange markets was apparently a success? Will he now agree to persuade the United States to lead the group of five again in concerted action, this time to bring down US dollar and other major currency interest rates?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right in saying that the shift in the United States policy on intervention in the foreign currency markets enabled the Plaza accord in September to be effective. I assure my hon. Friend that the accord is still in being.

Mr. Foot: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us what is the real rate of growth, defined by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) in his speech yesterday, and what he thinks of that real statement to the country?

Mr. Lawson: The right hon. Gentleman is correct in that over the period that the Government have been in office the average rate of growth has been slightly less than it was during the time the Labour Government, in which he served, were in office. However, if one leaves out North sea oil, the rate of growth is the same. The rate of growth under this Government has been as great as that under the Labour Government, despite the fact that we have had to undergo the worst world recession since the 1930s. Since that time, we have had the strongest recovery at any time since the first oil shock.

Mr. Ralph Howell: May I ask my right hon. Friend to ignore the advice that he has received from ex-Prime Ministers and others and to use all the funds that he can find to raise tax thresholds? Is he aware that it is scandalous that we are taking £5 from the single pensioner with an income of £70 per week and giving over £100 tax free to 16-year-olds who deliberately make themselves homeless?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right to point to the importance of getting income tax down. The Government have done that and we intend to continue to do so when the opportunity arises. However, it is clear that if, by any mischance, there were to be a Labour Government, income tax would be increased very substantially.

Mr. Hattersley: If the Chancellor is as concerned about wage costs as he said a moment ago, why did the Conservative party's most recent party political broadcast boast that during its six years in office wages had risen more quickly than prices?

Mr. Lawson: Because they have—very substantially indeed. That is why.

Black Economy

7. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the proportion of national income represented by the black economy.

9. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue in personal taxation and value added tax is estimated to be lost through the black economy.

Mr. Moore: It is not possible to form any reliable estimate of the size of the black economy or, therefore, of the consequential revenue loss in personal taxation as outside estimates of its size vary very widely from 2 per cent. to 16 per cent. of GDP.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend agree that there will be a sizeable black economy for as long as personal taxation remains as high as it is and the bureaucratic impediments remain a numerous as they are? What hope can he offer that taxation will soon come down to the levels that he referred to in answer to a previous question, enjoyed by other countries? What progress is being made in amending the sixth directive on VAT within the Community to raise thresholds for registration?

Mr. Moore: I shall try to concentrate on one of the questions. I recognise, as does my hon. Friend, that the reasons for the black economy are complex and uncertain and involve many social factors, but I do not think that any hon. Member would deny that a history of high taxation and high levels of bureaucracy have obviously been factors in encouraging the black economy. The degree to which we can reduce the levels of taxation and remove the burden of regulation on business will play a part in reducing the black economy.

Mr. Colvin: What can my hon. Friend do to remove some of the bureaucratic burdens, particularly in connection with VAT, which at present drive people into the black economy? Has he seen the survey published in *The Times* of 28 October, which shows not only the party political allegiance of those in the black economy, but that members of the Social Democratic and Liberal parties are among those most likely to be on the fiddle?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend will remember the White Paper entitled "Lifting the Burden", which I had the privilege of introducing in the House in July. He will know of the commitment of my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment and that of the Government to reducing the burdens.

The second part of my hon. Friend's question is somewhat subjective in character. However, when one

considers the black economy, it behoves all of us to remember that there are two sides to transactions—those who receive the payments and those who make the payments. We should be concerned with that aspect.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Does the Minister regard fraud in the City as part of the black economy, or what colour is it?

Mr. Moore: The Government regard all fraud, of whatever character, as completely unacceptable.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why should more civil servants be involved in pursuing social security fraud than Inland Revenue fraud?

Mr. Moore: The pursuit of fraud is not simply a reflection of the numbers involved. Despite reductions in the number of Inland Revenue staff over the past six years, there has been an increased commitment to Inland Revenue staff in that area. Specifically, 920 were committed to that work in November 1983. The key to the detection of fraud and evasion is better targeting and greater cost-effectiveness. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman will listen for a moment, he will be happy to hear that the yield from investigating evasion went up from £111 million in 1979 to £371 million in 1983-84.

Mr. Stern: Would my hon. Friend care to estimate the effect on the size of the black economy of the SDP proposal to increase the basic rate to 39p, if it were ever to be implemented?

Mr. Moore: It is clear from an earlier response that as our starting rate is so much higher than that of our competitor countries, it must have a significant impact as a deterrent to honest declaration of income.

Mr. Weetch: Does the Minister agree that a great deal of the black economy is in the building industry, especially building contracts of small value? Does he further agree that that is caused by the steep rate of VAT on home improvements and extensions? Does he accept that VAT of 15 per cent. on such things is a retrogressive imposition, especially when the construction industry is flat on the floor in so many such places?

Mr. Moore: I cannot begin to believe that one could make such a subjective and negative judgment about the building industry. It is difficult to understand why, when the rate of VAT is exactly the same for that industry as for others, that should be supposed to encourage evasion.

Mr. Fairbairn: Does the Chancellor of the Exchequer appreciate that if those who employ a person did not have to pay income tax out of already taxed income on behalf of that employee, the number of people tempted into the black economy would be vastly reduced?

Mr. Moore: I have the distinct impression that that is one of our first Budget submissions, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will have heard it.

Inflation

10. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he uses in forecasting the level of inflation.

Mr. Lawson: The details of the inflation forecast are set out in the autumn statement.

Mr. Foulkes: Has the Chancellor seen the report of the Institute of Fiscal Studies, which shows that pensioners' cost of living is going up more than the retail prices index, thereby pushing down pensioners' buying power? Since the Government have allowed for only a 1 per cent.—1p in the pound—increase for pensioners next year, what action will he take to remedy that?

Mr. Lawson: The increase that pensioners get in the next uprating will be geared precisely to the increase in the retail prices index. If that increase is low, the whole nation, particularly pensioners, should welcome it. Pensioners had an increase of 7 per cent. this month. The pensioner prices index at 5 per cent. is less than the retail prices index at 5·4 per cent.

Mr. Leigh: Will my right hon. Friend direct the attention of Labour Members to a fact that they seem to have a curious amnesia about—that the forecast rate of inflation at 4 per cent. is exactly half the rate of inflation achieved in the best month of the best year of the previous Labour Government?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right to point to that contrast. The highest monthly rate of inflation during this Parliament is lower than the lowest monthly rate of inflation in the previous Labour Government. It is extraordinary that Labour Members should wish for a high rate of increase in the pension, because, as that is geared to the RPI, it could only mean a high rate of inflation. Is that what they want?

Mr. Ashton: As this year profits are expected to increase by 28 per cent. and wages by only 7 or 8 per cent. and as since 1981 profits have gone up in total by 96 per cent. and wages by 46 per cent., why does the right hon. Gentleman continue to demand cuts in wages to keep down inflation?

Hon. Members: What has that to do with the question?

Mr. Lawson: As my right hon. and hon. Friends point out, that has little to do with the question. Nevertheless, I am happy to answer it if you, Mr. Speaker, are happy that I should do so.

I welcome the recovery in profitability in industry, which had reached absymally low levels under the previous Labour Government. That recovery has allowed investment to go ahead under this Government, leading to more people in work.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the combination of low and falling inflation with steady growth and a good level of company profitability offers the most favourable circumstances for creating new jobs?

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is correct. It is that combination that we have secured. It is a prize which has eluded previous Governments and which we intend to continue to secure by continuing with the policies on which we have embarked.

Mr. Hattersley: May I get the Government's view, position and policy on wages and inflation clear? A moment ago the Chancellor endorsed the party-political boast that wage settlements were running ahead of inflation. Is he glad about that, and does he want it to continue for the rest of the Government's lifetime?

Mr. Lawson: I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman has such difficulty in understanding elementary economic facts. Under this Government, growth in living standards generally has risen far more than it did under the previous

Labour Government. However, I regret that too much has gone to those in work, as a result of which those out of work have increased in numbers. Therefore, greater restraint by employers in awarding wage increases would lead to more people being in work. However, the total rise in living standards overall is three or four times as great as it was under the previous Labour Government.

Pound Sterling (Value)

11. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the trade weighted value of the pound sterling in October 1985 compared with October 1979.

Mr. Lawson: The average value of the sterling index in October 1985 was 80·4 compared with 88·0 in October 1979.

Mr. Hamilton: Is that not a further indictment of the Government's incompetence and a denial of all the promises made in 1979? Does it not underline the categorical statement made by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) that the country is now in a parlous state and that, if the trend continues, the pound will soon become confetti?

Mr. Lawson: I am glad to note the hon. Gentleman's interest in these matters, but I have to tell him that the main reason for the change has been a sharp increase in the dollar against all currencies over that period which has not fully unwound, despite recent events. It would be kinder to my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) if I did not comment on the economic policies during his tenure of office. However, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no chance under this Government of the pound becoming confetti money.

Mr. Latham: Should we assume from the previous supplementary question that the Labour party wishes to push up the exchange rate and thereby bankrupt British exporters?

Mr. Lawson: It is difficult to discern the Opposition's policy on the exchange rate. Half the time they want a higher exchange rate, and the other half they want a lower exchange rate. Half the time they complain about the borrowing requirement being too high, and the other half they complain about it being too low. It would be instructive if, at some stage, the Opposition cleared their mind and said what their policy was.

Age Allowance

12. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to his Department of the increase in the age allowance for the last financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Moore: The increases announced in the 1985 Budget will cost about £160 million in a full year.

Mr. Bowden: Does my hon. Friend accept that increases in the age allowance are an excellent way of helping millions of pensioners? Will he urge the Chancellor to ensure in next April's Budget that the age allowance is increased at least in line with personal allowances?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend has a long and successful record of trying to ensure real increases for the elderly, especially pensioners, so he will be pleased to hear me remind the House that since 1978-79 we have increased the threshold for the elderly by 10 per cent. in real terms. The threshold for an elderly married couple is the highest in real terms since the second world war. That is in startling contrast to the position under the Labour Government, when the tax threshold for the elderly fell in real terms.

Inflation

13. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the current level of inflation.

Mr. Lawson: During the 12 months to October 1985, the retail prices index increased by 5·4 per cent.

Mr. MacKay: Does my right hon. Friend agree that some pay increases in the private sector, which have been excessive and not linked to productivity, will not only increase inflation but will affect our efficiency and productivity and the drive for jobs?

Mr. Lawson: I agree with my hon. Friend that if private employers had a firmer grip on their costs, especially wage costs, it would benefit their companies, the ecomony, and, above all, the creation of employment. I was glad to hear the CBI preach that message loud and clear.

Mr. Skinner: Is not one of the most worrying aspects of inflation the fact that, according to the Government's figures, inflation is running at 5·4 per cent., yet interest rates remain in double figures? In some markets, 13 and 14 per cent. rates are obtainable. Is not the real inflation rate the difference between the Government's figure and real interest rates? That is the problem that the Government must handle. During their tenure of office that gap has been twice as large as it was under the Labour Government.

Mr. Lawson: It is perfectly true that although the Government have succeeded in reducing inflation to a low rate, which is coming down even further, under the Labour Government inflation went up so high that real interest rates were negative. That is nothing to be proud of.

Mr. Freeman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that under SDP policies—the SDP is not represented in the Chamber this afternoon—the current rate of inflation would increase significantly? If we reflated, we would not reach a maximum rate of inflation of 7½ per cent., as the SDP forecasts, but a rate substantially greater than that.

Mr. Lawson: My hon. Friend is right. The chief economic spokesman for the SDP said recently that an increase in inflation to 7½ per cent. would be a good idea. My hon. Friend is right to say that it would not stop there, but would go much higher. The only question that I cannot answer is: where are SDP Members today?

Mr. Ron Brown: It is abundantly clear that the Government have not solved the inflation problem. Is the Chancellor aware that his 1979 pound is now worth 53p? He seems to believe in mini-Budgets, mini-wages and mini-money.

Mr. Lawson: Inflation has not yet been reduced to zero, but I am glad to say that we are heading gradually in that direction.

Nationalised Industries (Assets)

14. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the individual nationalised industries and their respective assets that combine to produce the £90 billion referred to in his speech on the address, *Official Report* 13 November, column 585.

Mr. MacGregor: The electricity supply, gas and water industries account for about four fifths of nationalised industry aggregate current cost net asset values. We shall continue to return businesses to the private sector in accordance with our stated and highly beneficial policy.

Mr. Penhaligon: How much of the £90 billion does the Minister regard as saleable, and for how much?

Mr. MacGregor: It has already been made clear in the autumn statement that over the next three years we estimate the proceeds of privatisation to be £4¾ billion each year. We have already announced plans for British Gas, British Airways and the British Airports Authority. It is clear that these policies are sensible and right, for a wide variety of reasons.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Favell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Favell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that far too little publicity is given to northern industrial towns, such as Stockport, where rates are kept down, free enterprise is encouraged and new industry, commerce and jobs are attracted, and that far too much publicity is given to northern citadels of Socialism, such as Liverpool, which do little else but stand around with arms outstretched for Government handouts?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Sir. I warmly congratulate Stockport on its splendid efforts and the magnificent co-operation between the metropolitan borough council, the chamber of commerce and all the organisations concerned with getting more small and more new business into the area. They have been very successful.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Prime Minister realise that our closest EEC partners and our friends in the Commonwealth supported a resolution at the United Nations calling for negotiations on the future of the Falklands? Does she accept that that was because Argentina made a major concession by dropping its insistence on discussions on sovereignty and instead substituted

"all aspects of the future of the Falklands"?

Why does the right hon. Lady not respond to that and agree to restore diplomatic relations with Argentina and enter into discussions about the future of the islands?

The Prime Minister: Anyone who thinks that a motion that contains the phrase

"negotiations on all aspects of the future of the Falklands"

does not include sovereignty must be absolutely bonkers.

Q2. **Mr. Stanbrook** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November 1985.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Stanbrook: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Government will not seek, nor encourage anyone else, to set obstacles in the way of the Ulster Unionists who wish to resign their seats to provide an opportunity for the people of Northern Ireland to express their opinion on the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

The Prime Minister: I can reassure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will follow the habit and custom of his predecessors and accede to any relevant request that he may receive.

Dr. Owen: Is the Prime Minister aware that during the Falklands war——

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: The right hon. Gentleman has only just walked into the Chamber.

Dr. Owen: The Prime Minister has only just walked in, I might add—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I call the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen).

Dr. Owen: Is the Prime Minister aware that during the war against the Argentines in the Falklands she used the United Nations charter as the reason why we resisted the aggression of the Argentines? Is she further aware that that same United Nations charter imposes an obligation on Britain, as on all other countries, to try to settle their disputes by the use of negotiations——

Mr. Churchill: Surrender!

Dr. Owen: Negotiation does not mean surrender. It is perfectly possible to enter into negotiations on all aspects while reserving our position on sovereignty.

It is high time that the Prime Minister and the Government recognised the democratic Government in Argentina and accepted that the democratically elected President of Argentina has criticised the junta which preceeded him.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have tried to negotiate with the Argentines on other matters. Indeed, we have tried to restore normal commercial relations, but they have refused. Nevertheless, we have permitted imports into this country from Argentina. Thus, there is nothing about which to criticise this Government.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the UN charter. He will be aware that we tabled an amendment to the relevant motion before the General Assembly. That amendment was designed to uphold the right of self-determination of the people of the Falkland Islands. The UN turned down that amendment.

Q3. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowden: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to reflect on the sense of despair and outrage that

will be felt by the ratepayers of Southwark when they learn that Southwark council has allowed rent arrears to rise to a record £23 million?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that such high arrears are absolutely inexcusable, especially in view of the advice recently given by the Audit Commission. I hope that councils with such large arrears will soon take steps to diminish them.

Mr. Kinnock: The Gas Bill is published today—*[Interruption.]* Is it not now clear that the Prime Minister, having frittered away the bonus of North Sea oil, is about to do the same with a great national asset that has provided the British people with a steady income and excellent service for many years? Why is the Prime Minister still insisting on giving away the public good of all for the sake of the private profit of a few?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman has actually been able to read all of the Gas Bill today, I congratulate him. Privatisation is this Government's policy. The assets will be sold to those who wish to purchase them. In particular, the employees will have an excellent chance to purchase shares—a chance that they have never had under any previous Government.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister knows as well as I do that the sell-offs that she has undertaken and the one that she now proposes will not bring people's capitalism. Only institutions and rich individuals have made a substantial killing. If the right hon. Lady is so concerned about the general welfare, will she put the interests of 16 million gas users before the interests of a small number of shareholders, whatever their current status?

The Prime Minister: Most industries that have been denationalised have done far better under privatisation, and I believe that this one will do so. I believe in employees having a chance to have a stake in their business. I know that the right hon. Gentleman cannot stand it.

Q4. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: During her busy day, will my right hon. Friend have time to look at *The Observer* for last Sunday, and particularly at the reference to a secret report to the national executive of the Labour party which expressed deep gloom at Labour's prospects of winning the next general election? Is that not proof, if proof were needed, that the successes——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister may be asked questions only on matters for which she has responsibility.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I was coming to that, Mr. Speaker. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that shows, if it needed showing, that even in the Labour party there are people, such as their policy director, who know that the Conservatives will win the next general election?

The Prime Minister: I welcome any conversion to realism and any conversion to the knowledge that this Government's policies, which are keeping down inflation, creating jobs, standing up to strikes and to places such as Liverpool are producing the right results.

Mr. McKelvey: Did the Prime Minister hear about the military style coup that took place in the House last night, when members of the Scottish Back-Bench committee were ousted—or at least the chairman, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) was ousted—by those right hon. and hon. elements from south of the border who were brought in as Lobby fodder——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Again, that is not a matter for which the Prime Minister is responsible.

Mr. McKelvey: In that case, may I ask whether the Prime Minister is aware that such antics are regarded by Scottish voters as demonstrating a lack of democracy? Will the Government take steps to stop it?

The Prime Minister: I think that that is more a matter for the Leader of the House than for me.

Sir William Clark: Will my right hon. Friend remind the House that the institutional investor who has put money into British Telecom and who may invest in British Gas is using the savings of millions of small people who depend on that investment for their pensions?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will be aware that we firmly believe in the privatisation programme. It brings benefits to employees and investors, and a good income to those who invest in such companies.

Mr. Foot: Will the Prime Minister answer the question that she failed to answer on Tuesday: when will the effective cut in the real value of child benefit be restored?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows the increases that have taken place over the whole social security system. He must wait until a White Paper is published to see what any future plans contain.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: If the hoped for improvement in cross-border security does not result in good time from the Hillsborough agreement, will the Government allow the agreement to lapse and pursue friendly and close relations with the Irish Republic through diplomatic channels and the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council which my right hon. Friend did so much to set up?

The Prime Minister: We earnestly hope that there will be an improvement in cross-border co-operation which will lead to an improvement in security in Northern Ireland. My hon. Friend will understand why I say that this agreement must be given a chance to work.

Q5. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer that I gave some minutes ago.

Mrs. Clwyd: Has the Prime Minister read the report in today's *Daily Mail*, which claims that the 4 million unemployed will be able to work on Sundays without loss of unemployment benefit if the Sunday trading laws are changed? Will she give an assurance that, if the laws are changed, she will not change the rules?

The Prime Minister: I have not read that report, but I do not accept that there are 4 million unemployed—*[Interruption.]* That figure is constantly being put about, but it is not correct. I hope that the Sunday trading Bill, which has yet to be debated by the other place and this House, will be passed. However, matters concerning any

changes to the laws affecting unemployment benefit are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Mr. Gregory: Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to see the early-day motion on the import of dangerous toys? Will she consider the possibility of placing the onus on importers rather than retailers, so that there can be happiness rather than misery at Christmas?

The Prime Minister: Yes. Some time ago, warnings used to be issued about certain toys. They have not been issued recently because there was some criticism of them. As my hon. Friend knows, there are certain prohibition orders, but it is for both the importer and the person selling the toy to have regard for its safety.

Q6. **Mr. Blair** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Blair: Why is it that many months after these affairs took place the case concerning Johnson Matthey Bankers is only now being referred to the DPP? Nothing has been done about insider trading with regard to BT, and nothing has been done about the scandal of the Lloyd's insurance markets. Why does the Prime Minister not realise that, to be effective, the rule of law that applies to the inner cities must apply with equal vigour to the City?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is well aware that matters of fraud are for the police and that matters of prosecution are for the Director of Public Prosecutions. The day that politicians interfere with prosecutions, the rule of law will cease to be upheld.

Q7. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Brown: Has my right hon. Friend read the speech made by our hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science on Monday, in which he suggested that there was still a lack of consumer choice in state education? Does she agree that the solution that he proposed—that the market has a role to play in assisting consumers of education to make their choice—was pointed to in "No Turning Back"? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that that pamphlet contains some solutions, to which many Conservative Members look?

The Prime Minister: Earlier this week I was asked about the pamphlet, and I have read it. My hon. Friend is aware that the House is to consider an Education Bill, which will strengthen the voice of parents in running schools. I share his anxiety about parents not having a sufficient choice of schools. That is a matter to which we must pay earnest attention.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House if he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Dockyard Services Bill.

There will be a debate on a motion on the EEC sugar regime and on starch production refunds. Details of the relevant documents will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER—Opposition Day (1st Allotted Day). Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate on the problems of the Northern region. Afterwards there will be a debate on the Silentnight dispute. Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

Motions on the National Film Finance Corporation (Dissolution) Order and the National Film Finance Corporation (Transfer of Assets and Liabilities) Order.

WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Bill *[Lords]*.

Remaining stages of the Northern Ireland (Loans) Bill.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER — Second Reading of the Education (Amendment) Bill.

Motion on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No. 1) Order.

FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 9 DECEMBER—There will be a debate on the fixed channel link on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

[Relevant European Documents
Debate on Monday 2 December

(a) 8687/85	*Sugar Regime: quotas and levies*
(b) 8781/85	*Intervention price for raw sugar 1985-86*
(c) 9178/85	*Production refunds on sugar used in the chemical industry*
(d) 11172/84	*Starch production refunds*
(e) 8688/85	*Starch production refunds*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(a) HC 5–xxx (1984-85), para 3.
(b) HC 5–xxx (1984-85), para 4.
(c) HC 5–xxx (1984-85), para 15.
(d) HC 5–xii (1984-85), para 1 and HC 5–xxx (1984-85), para 13.
(e) HC 5–xxx (1984-85), para 13.]

Mr. Kinnock: I see from next week's business that there is still no time allowed for a debate on the autumn statement. That means that the debate will be at least a week later than it was last year. The autumn statement is looking more like a Christmas statement but, unfortunately, without the eventide benevolence. Will the Leader of the House tell us exactly when we shall have that debate, and accept that further delays will begin to look rather suspicious?

Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us when the Government will produce the White Paper on the so-called social security review? It has now been expected for several weeks. Why has it been postponed? Is it because the Government are embarrassed by its contents, or because they are hoping to slip it in shortly before the Christmas recess?

Why are the Government limiting discussions on the motion on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) Order to three hours next Thursday? The House should have a proper opportunity to consider the codes, especially as the Government are apparently so reluctant to give us a full-day debate on law and order, which we have sought on previous occasions.

Finally, will the Leader of the House ensure that the Prime Minister makes a statement to the House on her return from the Luxembourg summit next week, and that she does not make do with a press conference, as she did when she returned from Brussels last week?

Mr. Biffen: I assure the Leader of the Opposition, that there is nothing suspicious about the timing of the debate upon the autumn statement, but I join him in recognising the importance of that topic. I assure him that I shall make provision for that debate in my statement next week. The social services White Paper will be published shortly and will provide further evidence of the Government's style and determination to win through to a third period of office.

I hope that the debate on Thursday on the motion on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (Codes of Practice) (No. 1) Order has been set in the context of business generally on Thursday and will enable a reasonable debate to take place. We may reconsider the matter if the right hon. Gentleman thinks otherwise.

I am happy to confirm that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will report to the House on the European Community summit meeting which will take place in Luxembourg.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Will my right hon. Friend find some way of marking the fact that it is now 50 years since the number of days lost in strikes and industrial activity in this country has been so low?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what my hon. and learned Friend has said. It is a most welcome fact to which he draws the attention of the House. I have my difficulties in finding time, but he may be able to organise a stunning early-day motion on the topic.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will the Leader of the House say when time may be found to discuss the establishment of the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier envisaged in the Hillsborough agreement?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman says. It is an important point, but I can offer no prospect of time in the immediate future.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the answer that he has just given to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence)? Should not our remarkable strike-free record be debated so that the House may make up its mind about whether further measures are desirable?

Mr. Biffen: I have to make a balanced judgment in all these matters. I still believe that a compelling early-day motion may be the precursor for further pressure.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that a gross injustice is being

done to a small group of vaccine-damaged children, and that nearly 200 hon. Members on both sides of the House have signed early-day motion No. 74?

[That this House believes that the proposed £20,000 payment to vaccine damaged children is grossly inadequate for a lifetime of severe disability; expresses its strong support for the immunisation scheme; but calls upon the Government to provide the few tragic and unwitting casualties of this state-sponsored scheme with compensation comparable to that given to industrially injured people, or that awarded by the courts to those similarly disabled.]

The motion calls for a state-sponsored compensation scheme. May we debate that matter next week?

Mr. Biffen: I note what the right hon. Gentleman has said, and the considerable number of names attached to the early-day motion. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to the point.

Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory (Wells): Will my right hon. Friend delay the publication of the social security White Paper until the Government's personal taxation proposals are known, so as not to rule out the integration of the system, because separate dates for the two papers will effectively rule out that highly desirable option?

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to the point made by my hon. Friend, but I believe that the House would like to have the social services White Paper in its possession as soon as practicably possible.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): Will the Leader of the House bring early-day motion No. 56 to the attention of the Minister for Overseas Development? It relates to a new deal for the Third world and has been supported by 105 hon. Members.

[That this House supports the call by the Transport and General Workers Union for a new deal for the Third World and for Her Majesty's Government to expand overseas aid to one per cent. of the gross national product, which should be directed into basic rural development for the benefit of the poorest people in the Third World, particularly the continent of Africa; further supports the basis of the World Conservation policy for combined conservation and development to provide for the needs of the people for food, fuel, timber and conserve wildlife, plants, forests and estuaries; calls for preferential trade arrangements for the Third World with an emphasis on agricultural development; and supports substantial increases in aid as called for by the United Nations to help the poorest of the poor.]

The motion suggests a constructive way of giving positive aid to the poorest people in the world.

Mr. Biffen: I shall certainly accede to the request that I draw the contents of the early-day motion to the attention of my right hon. Friend. The hon. Gentleman will agree that the subject was extensively debated but a while ago in the debate on the Queen's speech.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): How will the House decide on which side of the fixed Channel link we should drive? Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister toss a coin with President Mitterrand?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend can make precisely that pertinent and headline-catching point in the debate.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): The Leader of the House has announced the Second Reading debate on the Dockyard Services Bill. Will he ensure that all hon. Members, especially Conservatives, are given some intimation of the views of the Select Committee on Defence, particularly its second report, which again rejects the Government's preferred option? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the information in the Touche Ross report which is available to private contractors on a restricted basis is made available to all hon. Members? It is wrong that this report is circulating in board rooms where directors are bidding for vital public assets but is not available to hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: I agree that the Select Committee's report is one of a body of evidence that the House would like to consider during the Second Reading debate. I shall look into the hon. Gentleman's second point.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to notices of motion Nos 35, 36, 37, 38 and 40 which relate to changes in Select Committees which have been effectively blocked by the efforts of the Liberal party, for example in notice of motion No. 39. As this is having a damaging effect on the Select Committee on Agriculture, which will be affected by notice of motion No. 37, will my right hon. Friend take steps to ensure that the blocking activities of the Liberal party are effectively stopped so that other Select Committees are not damaged by the efforts of that minority party?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend is right in implying that when the Standing Orders concerning membership of the Select Committees were drawn up it was never intended that they should be subject to the kind of tactics that have characterised the Liberal party's behaviour in recent weeks. If the Liberal party wishes to be identified with a constructive role in the work of the Select Committees, no doubt it will have second thoughts.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): Will the Leader of the house consider delaying publication of the building societies Bill until publication of the consultative document on how building societies can turn themselves into companies in order to provide adequate time for public discussion? Has not the Government's recent experience of legislating for an organisation like the Trustee Savings Bank — to turn from one type of organisation to another—suggested that extreme caution in such legislation is necessary?

Mr. Biffen: I am advised that the Bill as introduced will make only general provisions for building societies to convert themselves into companies if their members approve. More detailed proposals will be brought forward at a later stage in the light of views expressed on the consultative paper. There should, therefore, be sufficient time for comments to be taken into account. I hope that this meets the hon. Lady's anxieties. If she is still not happy, perhaps we could consider the matter.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the large number of letters received by hon. Members from constituents who are opposed to the proposed legislation on shop hours, especially as it affects Sunday trading? Will he ensure that the two great Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter are exempted from that legislation?

Mr. Biffen: The legislation is now before another place and it will arrive here in due course. In the light of its condition when it reaches us, we can take our debates further and my hon. Friend's points can be argued.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): What is the Government's attitude to a debate on the new independent colliery review procedure? Last Thursday the Leader of the House undertook to write to me about it; he did not do so. Two weeks ago he undertook to speak to the Secretary of State for Energy about it; he did not do so. The right hon. Gentleman is in danger of misleading me and the House on an important topic which now requires urgent attention because three pits are due to make application by way of appeal through the independent colliery review procedure. When will the Government make a statement?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman makes it sound as though he were taking on the entire Government machine. He has such heroic qualities that I know he can do that easily enough. I have written to him today.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there are many Members of the United Kingdom Parliament who want to see the Anglo-Irish agreement succeed and who would like to see the early establishment of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier? Will my right hon. Friend be slightly more optimistic in promising time for the House to debate the issue, to enable us to resolve to establish an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier as soon as possible, and to give every support to the initiative taken by the Governments and Parliaments of the United Kingdom and of Ireland?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that my hon. Friend will realise that I cannot go beyond the answer that I have already given, but I am fully conscious of the anxiety that the matter be expedited.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I am sure that the Leader of the House has read early-day motion 138.

[That this House congratulates the trade unionists at the Forgemasters Atlas site, Sheffield, in their stand for continued full trade union recognition; rejects the 1920 style management that has been brought in to manage the company; notes that this follows promises by the Government, when setting up Phoenix 3, that the management would work through the trade union organisation at the Atlas Works; and regrets that the actions of management in sacking the convenor of shop stewards, who had 45 years service with the company including 30 years as chairman/convenor of the Shop Stewards Committee, and the break up of the Shop Stewards Committee have succeeded in bringing about the longest dispute for over 50 years at the company which was supported by over 66 per cent. of the workers in a secret ballot.]

A series of problems has been caused by the strike. The steel unions have always in the past had good relations with the management. In view of the Government's rationalisation of their programme on steel, and the effect that it has had on morale, with the breaking down of all trade union negotiating machinery, contrary to the agreements made by the Government on Phoenix 3, is the Leader of the House prepared to consider initiating a debate on the subject next week?

Mr. Biffen: I shall most certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I realise that it is an industrial dispute which has very serious implications for the steel industry in Sheffield.

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Why has not my right hon. Friend reintroduced the rule giving Mr. Speaker power to discipline the length of Back-Bench Members' speeches during times of great stress in the House? Is he aware that yesterday not one Back-Bench speech was less than 10 minutes, and that that was also the case on the previous day? If hon. Members are not prepared to discipline themselves, should not we pass the matter back to Mr. Speaker so that those who take an interest and want to make a contribution are able to do so?

Mr. Biffen: I take my hon. Friend's point. There are several procedural recommendations which I hope to be able to bring before the House in the very near future.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): Is the Leader of the House aware that the Supreme Court of Military Appeal in Turkey is about to make a decision which will affect the fate of the Turkish peace prisoners? In view of the fact that the Turkish authorities listen carefully to the views of this country, will he join me in appealing for clemency for those men and women who have suffered far too long simply for desiring peace in the world?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman makes his very moving appeal in the presence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): When those hon. Members who represent constituencies in Northern Ireland leave us for a temporary period — obviously we shall miss them—what does my right hon. Friend propose to do about legislation concerning Northern Ireland? Shall we have a rest from it until they come back? I have especially in mind orders that are taken late at night. Would it not be sensible to hold up such matters until those Members return to the House?

Mr. Biffen: The Government of the United Kingdom, including all its component parts, will proceed whether or not there are by-elections pending.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Leader of the House consider letting the House know as soon as possible the dates of the Christmas recess? It is important, before the recess, to have a statement concerning mineworkers and the non-payment of national insurance contributions, as their benefits run out on 6 January, the day on which we might be coming back.

Mr. Biffen: May I say at once how much I admire the skill with which the hon. Gentleman is trying to finesse out of me a date that I do not yet know. I am most concerned, for the convenience of the House, that it should know, at the earliest opportunity, the dates of the recess, and I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Tuesday's debate on the Northern region will be broadly defined and will include the affairs of Yorkshire and Humberside? If that is not the intention, will he pursue that possibility through the usual channels?

Mr. Biffen: The motion will be in the name of the Opposition and they will draw it. However, I have a suspicion that if one is standing in Tyne Bridge, Yorkshire is almost in the Garden of England.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): When will the House have an opportunity to debate the Select Committee of Privileges report on the confidentiality of the proceedings of Select Committees and when will it also have an opportunity to debate the report of the Select Committee on Members' Interests on the declaration and registration of interests by parliamentary lobbyists? Could those debates be held in the near future—perhaps on a full day that is split in two?

Mr. Biffen: On the hon. Gentleman's second question about the Select Committee's report on the declaration and registration of interests by parliamentary lobbyists, I have already said that I hope that a debate will be held in the near future. As for his first question, I have nothing to add to what I said last week.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Will the announcement of the rate support grant for England be made before Christmas? When it is made will my right hon. Friend ensure that the maximum amount of time is made available between the announcement and the voting of the necessary moneys through Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: I am not in a position to answer my hon. Friend's question but I shall certainly draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I realise that it is a very important topic.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that since October, when the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. and learned Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Waddington) made his extraordinary allegations against individual hon. Members over their handling of immigration cases the House has been unable to debate the matter? As there have been many requests for a debate on the operation of the immigration laws and the fear and insecurity that faces many immigrant families, can the Leader of the House hold out any hope of an early debate?

Mr. Biffen: I understand that my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State has received a number of requests and that he is considering them. The discussions that were proposed by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will be initiated in due course and I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's comments are brought to their attention. In the meantime, he might like to reflect upon the fact that Home Office questions will arise on Thursday of next week.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): Has the Leader of the House had an opportunity to look at early-day motion 71 in my name and those of many of my hon. Friends:

[That this House condemns any policy of Government direction of the investment of the funds of occupational pension schemes into a national investment bank; and confirms support for the freedom of trustees of such funds to invest their assets in accordance with their interpretation of the best interests of their members.]

Will he call together the trustees of the House of Commons pension fund and ask them whether they agree with the suggestion of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) of interference with the assets of private sector pension funds?

Mr. Biffen: I shall draw that point to the attention of the chairman of the House of Commons pension fund.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): As the Prime Minister has now accepted the extent to which teachers' salaries in Scotland have fallen behind since the Houghton report, when may we expect a Government statement about how they will resolve the two-year crisis that faces Scottish education?

Mr. Biffen: If the hon. Gentleman will allow me to dilute the question by incorporating the rest of the United Kingdom, he may find that he has a chance to put forward his arguments during the Second Reading of the Education (Amendment) Bill on Thursday next.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate upon the constitution of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland? There seems to be confusion in the House about its extent, in particular over jury vetting, Sunday shopping and other matters. There is to be an Opposition debate next week on the northern regions of this country, but it will stop at the Scottish border. When we hold that debate can we be assured that the Scots will not be held responsible for the Anglo-Irish agreement?

Mr. Biffen: As ever, I shall give compassionate and considerate attention to what has been requested, but we have had a fairly emotionally exhausting two day's debate about the problems of Northern Ireland, and that should be enough on constitutional matters for the time being.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): As it has been many years since the Law Commission recommended reform of the law on insurance, and in particular the removal of the scandalous rules on material non-disclosure and exclusion clauses in insurance contracts, are the Government proposing legislation on the subject? If the Government still refuse to legislate, can we at least have a debate?

Mr. Biffen: I cannot go beyond what was revealed in the Queen's Speech, but perhaps my most helpful course would be to draw the point made by the hon. and learned Member to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend consider introducing a debate on the workings of the Church of England and in particular the recommendations of the review body of the Crown Appointments Commission concerning appointment of bishops, and on the Church Commissioners and their current roles? That body has £240 million invested in shops and major stores that will be operating on Sundays, which is something to which the General Synod of the Church of England is completely opposed.

Mr. Biffen: The Government's ambitions are fairly fully extended with the policy proposals and legislation that we now have. Although the suggested topic is a highly entertaining and important one I hope that it will arise from a private Member's Bill rather than from one from the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When will the Leader of the House agree to the request that we have now been making for several weeks for a debate about the fraudulent activities within the City of London so that we can debate the whole question of the Johnson Matthey Bank and the

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way it was abandoned by the parent company, Johnson Matthey plc? Could we not also discuss the question of how Mr. Peter Cameron-Webb and Mr. Peter Dix took away £38 million from Lloyds and how the Government managed to find £250 million to bail out the Export Credit Guarantee Department when it went bankrupt? Do we not need this debate quickly, because all this fraud and embezzlement and bribery has now spread to the National Coal Board?

Mr. Biffen: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in deploring fraudulent activity wherever it occurs in the City, and will join me in saying that that undermines what is otherwise a widespread respect and enthusiasm for the free enterprise system. Having taken him with me thus far, I hope that he will now reflect with me on why, if there is an enormous and overwhelming national scandal, it is not featured on the first Opposition day?

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that on Tuesday evening, some of us attempted to have a debate on a progressive EEC directive on parental leave, a debate that was destroyed by the loutish behaviour of Conservative Members? Those scenes have been described as some of the worst that hon. Members who have been here for 30 years can remember. Will the Leader of the House have a word with the Conservative Members to persuade them to control their behaviour? Does he agree that it is not enough to be enthusiastic about the free market principles of the Treaty of Rome, but it is also essential to be enthusiastic about those principles that improve the rights of workers?

Mr. Biffen: It sounds to have been good parliamentary spectator sport and I much regret that I was not here on Tuesday evening, particularly as it was on one of those happy occasions when the House was rejecting the imperial authority of Strasbourg and Brussels. However, if any word uttered, or any behaviour, wounded the more tender susceptibilities of the hon. Lady, I regret it.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Is the Leader of the House aware that the question that I asked the Prime Minister was referred to as his responsibility? As he is the protector of the interests of Back Benchers and particularly of Scottish Conservative Back Benchers, who are an endangered species, will he look into the fashion in which the Scottish Back Bench Conservative spokesman is elected?

Mr. Biffen: I now understand more clearly the anxiety of the hon. Gentleman, which concerns the conduct of the Scottish Conservative Back-Bench committee. I have a vested interest in the committee. I know, from my years in opposition, that if an Englishman turned up on a Wednesday night he would get notice of the following week's business much earlier. As a result, pairing arrangements were much more satisfactory. I have no responsibility here, but I have total faith in the way in which the arrangements were conducted. I have no doubt that it has been much to the discomfiture of the hon. Gentleman, who was hoping for a much greater row.

Foreign Affairs Council

4 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, I will make a statement on the Foreign Affairs Council held in Brussels on 25 to 26 November at which I and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade represented the United Kingdom.

The Council agreed a mandate for negotiations with Mediterranean partners on the adaptation of their co-operation and association agreements to take account of Spanish and Portuguese accession. This covers measures designed to ensure that traditional trade flows from Mediterranean partners are not adversely affected. Agreement was also reached on a mandate for negotiations with Cyprus on a customs union.

The Commission reported to the Council on its recent visit to Tokyo for discussions with the Japanese Government on the Community's trade relations with Japan.

The Council also discussed the Community's trade relations with the United States, including the renegotiation of the 1982 carbon steel export restraint arrangement. The United Kingdom reserved its position on the proposed arrangement to allow time to consider the information the Commission had received from the United States about access to the United States market for semi-finished products.

The Council discussed the Commission's proposals for the 1986 generalised scheme of preferences.

The Council discussed arrangements for the forthcoming European Council in Luxembourg on 2 and 3 December, and adopted reports on European union and People's Europe which will be noted by the European Council without discussion.

A further session of the intergovernmental conference on the future development of the EEC was held at the same time, at which there was discussion of ways to accelerate progress towards our key objectives on the internal market.

Ministers also considered how to update the treaty to take account of the Community's role in technology and the environment. A meeting with representatives of the European Parliament was devoted to considering ways in which the Parliament might be able to express its views more fully before decisions are taken by the Council.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I suppose that we should be grateful that we are getting this report at all, but there is so little in it that I do not know what we have to be grateful for. However, next Monday the Prime Minister will attend the European Council, the EC Heads of Government summit, where the main item will be not citrus fruits in the Mediterranean area, trade with Japan or the generalised scheme of preferences but the proposed changes to the treaty of Rome.

Seldom has a European summit considered matters of greater importance or of more significance for the future, yet precisely what have we been told by the Foreign Secretary about the proposals that will be discussed at the summit or about the British position? The answer is: much less than we could have read in today's newspapers and those accounts are just as grey and confused, and almost as uninformative as the Foreign Secretary's statement.

What we heard from the Foreign Secretary was a series of platitudes with no substance and no detail. The House is still in the dark on those issues.

What will be the Government's stand on the essential issue at the summit of the virtual abolition of the national veto on European Community decisions? Are we prepared to settle for a veto on only the trivia of the European Community? Will we give the veto away with reckless generosity when hundreds of issues ranging from drugs to safety standards need to be discussed? Why are we being told nothing about it this afternoon?

Where do the Government stand on increased powers for the European Parliament, which figures so largely in the original ideas for the intergovernmental conference? Will we really be pressing for more power for the unelected European Commission rather than for the Council of elected ministers representing Governments? What is the Government's position on the new treaty on political co-operation? We have not heard a word about that. If such a treaty is adopted and a secretariat is set up, and we hear that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary are enthusiasts of it, what will happen at the United Nations when the issue of the Falkland Islands arises and we find ourselves isolated by our European Community partners, yet again, in the block-headed and intransigent attitude that we continue to take in that world forum?

Is the *Daily Express* right in its speculation that a deal was done between Chancellor Kohl and the Prime Minister? Was there a deal to get together to veto the proposals? Will the Foreign Secretary tell the House precisely what the Government's attitude will be? Most important, why is there nothing from the Foreign Secretay or any other Minister about the deliberations on the European Community budget, which overhangs every other issue that is before the Community? yesterday, ministers, including a Minister from our Government, agreed to £800 million being cut from the European Parliament's proposed budget. Why are our Government again in the ignominious position of being in the last ditch of slashing the social and regional funds? They are the two European funds which might make a difference to the 15 million jobless people in the Community.

At the same time, the Government leave the extravagance of agricultural spending totally unscathed. Since those social and regional funds are now frozen, but the books still do not balance and the European Parliament is still discontented, how is the next crisis to be resolved? If it is ever resolved will it again make the poorest and the most deprived nations with the highest unemployment pay for the profligacy of farm spending within the Community?

We have heard a completely unacceptable statement from the Foreign Secretary telling the House, yet again, nothing about the British Government's position on crucial and central constitutional issues for Britain. We must hope that under examination we hear more than we know now.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on having sustained the excitement that he generated when I did not make a statement so that it greets the statement that I have made today.

There will be an answer from my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury setting out the details of what took place at the Budget Council.

Mr. George Robertson: When?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It will be given this afternoon.

I am afraid that I cannot satisfy the hon. Gentleman's curiosity on the points that he raised about the Council, with which I was dealing, or on the alleged deals with Chancellor Kohl, even when they are reported in the *Daily Express*. The substance of what is taking place is that the political co-operation topics will be under consideration at Luxembourg. They are being actively considered largely on the basis of proposals put forward by the United Kingdom for the Milan summit.

On the subject of the existing arrangements, we have never argued that the treaty of Rome is immutable or should remain forever unchanged. We have said that it is for our partners to put forward proposals, which may or may not be justified. The conclusion will depend on whether they are likely to carry forward our objectives, above all the improvement of the internal market. The considerations for the Parliament are on the basis that I mentioned in my statement, to see whether it is possible for the European Parliament proposals to be taken more fully into acount while leaving the decision-making power with the European Council. There are no significant proposals for changes in the powers of the Commission. With regard to the veto, there has been virtually no discussion of the Luxembourg compromise at any of the recent meetings, and there are no proposals for changes.

Sir Anthony Kershaw (Stroud): Will my right hon. and learned Friend be able to press on with the work of political co-operation, which is a desirable objective? If achieved, it might serve to prevent the ill-considered actions of some of our allies, which was demonstrated at the United Nations yesterday on the Argentine proposals.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Improved arrangements for political co-operation in the Community should enable us to achieve common positions on political matters more frequently, but one must not deceive oneself in respect of the Falkland Islands, because the United States, for example, has voted against us for three consecutive years on that, and by no means all of our Commonwealth partners have taken the same view. That does not mean that our position is wrong — *[Interruption.]* — despite the encouragement that I am getting from Opposition Members. Our position reflects consistently the needs that the House would regard as important — first to seek improvements in our relations with the Government of Argentina, but secondly to do so on the basis that we uphold our commitment to the people of the Falkland Islands.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The Foreign Secretary referred to the intergovernmental conference. Does he agree that it will be impossible to improve the establishment of the internal market unless we improve decision making, which means a diminution of the veto? Secondly, will the Government reconsider their opposition to expanding the European Parliament's role, which was highlighted yesterday in the Budget Council, when Britain was isolated in the vote?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman must choose his arguments a little more consistently. I am not sure that the role of the Parliament in relation to the size of the budget as it has manifested itself so far is one of the strongest arguments for enlarging the powers of the Parliament. With regard to those powers, it is important

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to see whether there are ways that give an assurance that its views are taken as fully into account as possible without impeding the decision-taking capacity of the Community. As the hon. Gentleman rightly said, if we are to make progress towards the internal market as fast as we should like, it makes perfectly good sense to consider improvements in that decision-making machinery, including the possible scope for majority voting.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on one of the best statements on Europe that we have had for a very long time, but with regard to the People's Europe proposals, do the Government favour the plan for a European national anthem or a European flag? Can he say when he thinks those things should be sung or waved? Did he give the Council the reason why Her Majesty's Government changed their practice and did not vote against the proposal to give an extra subsidy to provide cheap, top quality beef to the Soviet Union at 15p a pound when they have always voted against such proposals in the past?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend's final point must be a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. He will have the opportunity to ask him about that later. The one point about my hon. Friend's intervention that alarms me is the enthusiasm with which he welcomed my statement. I can assure him that there are no proposals for either anthems or flags before the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): In the talks that the Foreign Secretary had about trade and so on with the United States and other countries, did he have a moment over his aperitif or even over his brandy and cigars to bring up the question of the multi-fibre arrangement, because jobs in my constituency and elsewhere are dependent on a strong MFA being negotiated? Many hundreds of thousands of jobs depend on that. Employers and trade unions are up in arms because they believe that British civil servants are taking the lead in making sure that a liberal MFA is negotiated.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have to confess that I was not smoking a cigar and I drank no brandy, and even over the modest aperitif, the topic suggested by the hon. Gentleman did not arise for discussion. However, it is an important matter and the Community is considering what attitudes should be adopted towards the MFA in the wider context of the GATT arrangements. As always, it will have to try to achieve a position that balances the interest expressed so inconsistently by both sides of the House in a sensible protection for our own textile industry, together with a liberal opportunity for the textile industries in the Third world. The problem remains to be solved.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure me about a matter that I raised with him last week, when he said that he had no recollection about possible negotiations affecting article 236 of the Treaty of Rome? I refer to proposed increases in the powers of the European Parliament vis-à-vis the Council, the Commission and the Parliament which could enhance the powers of the Parliament at the expense of Westminster. Will my right hon. and learned Friend also assure me that the possible southern blocking minority, with the accession of Portugal and Spain, will not result in an increase in the common agricultural policy, and an increase in the budgetary payments for this country?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the first part of my hon. Friend's question, one of the arguments advanced is that all the proposals made so far for enlarging the power of the Parliament do not involve the transfer of democratic power from any national Parliament to the European Parliament. That is an important argument, which must be looked at carefully. Our concern is to see that the powers of the European institutions are adjusted to enable them to work effectively and continue to take decisions in a sensible fashion. With regard to the CAP, unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that arrangements for the support of agriculture in virtually every democratic country in the world involve a constant battle with rising costs in an endeavour to meet the technologically expanding production. I do not believe that that task will become any more or less difficult as the result of the accession of Spain and Portugal.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Do we take it that at the meeting of the Foreign Ministers, what is happening in South Arfica was not touched on? Certainly the Foreign Secretary did not report on that and I would not have expected him to take the initiative of raising it at a Foreign Ministers' meeting. Is it not appropriate that the Foreign Ministers of the EEC should consider the issue at their meetings, bearing in mind the heavy economic investment by EEC countries in South Africa? Even on the issue of Mr. Nelson Mandela, will not the Foreign Ministers take the opportunity of making it clear that he should be immediately released from prison without any conditions?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Foreign Ministers' meeting during the past few days was not in the context of political co-operation. They were meeting on the agenda set out on the Foreign Affairs Council together with the important agenda before the intergovernmental conference. Therefore, it would not have been appropriate to deal with the matter. It was not on the agenda. However, the position of the Community has been stated many times, making it clear that we look for the unconditional and early release of Mr. Nelson Mandela as an important contribution to the prospect of stability in southern Africa, so there was no need to repeat it yet again this week.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): In the context of proposals to increase the role of the European Parliament in Community decision making, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with many members of the European Parliament who have taken the view for some time that that Parliament already has at its disposal more than adequate powers to exercise its influence on Community decision making? Has my right hon. and learned Friend considered the possibility that, because of its political nature and make-up, the European Parliament tends to be somewhat unstable and volatile, and lacks continuity in the thrust of its decision making? Does he agree that if its role were enhanced we could be in a worse position in terms of Community decision taking than at present? Have those thoughts gone through my right hon. and learned Friend's mind. Will that affect our position in the outcome of the intergovernmental conference?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not suppose that any parliamentary institution in the world could claim that it

was always free from instability and volatility. It is right to take account of the special nature of the European Parliament, composed as it will be of representatives of 12 nation states which are sometimes drawn by their attachment to their own country as much as by their attachment to the varying political groups that make it up because it is a young Parliament. Therefore, it is also important to make sure that any change in the treaty does not inhibit the effective working of the Community. Even so, it has been a subject of legitimate study whether one can look at the arrangements for the Parliament and its influence without impeding the work of the Community.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the European Parliament has repeatedly voted for increases in the regional and social funds and that the Council of Ministers has repeatedly put a red line through its proposals? Would not it be a good idea to give the European Parliament more power, particularly if its budget proposals were at the expense of agriculture? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that if politicians are elected to a Parliament to do a job of work, they cannot be urged to run and be hobbled at the same time?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not think that I can accept the description in the last part of the hon. Lady's question, although I know that she has considerable experience of the working of that institution. The difficulty with that Parliament, as with all others, is that it has to operate within a framework of budgetary discipline and one cannot give it an unbridled licence to increase expenditure on the regional fund without requiring it to have regard to the wider needs of budget discipline as a whole.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Did the Council discuss what has recently been graphically described by the Leader of the House as the imperial diktat of Strasbourg and Brussels—that there should be erected at every external port of the EC a massive sign in however many languages saying, "Welcome to the European Community"? If it was discussed did my right hon. and learned Friend tell the Commission that he thought that it was a daft idea and did he reinforce the policy of Her Majesty's Government that we believe in a Europe of nation states rather than a European nation?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I fear that that proposal, which has attracted my hon. Friend's enthusiastic attention, has not been discussed in my presence at any of the European gatherings.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): The Foreign Secretary mentioned that discussions took place on increasing trade with Cyprus. How is that trade with Cyprus to be increased and did the Ministers discuss the continuing and appalling division of Cyprus and the presence of Turkish troops in the northern part of Cyprus? Is it appropriate for countries within the EC to trade, possibly illegally, with the Turkish federated state of northern Cyprus, and what steps do the Ministers propose to take to hasten Cypriot unification?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman knows that we do not recognise the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and our attitude towards trade with Cyprus has been directed towards ensuring that the benefits of EC arrangements are applied equally to both communities. Article 5 of the co-operation agreement states that the rules governing trade between the Community and Cyprus shall not give rise to discrimination between nationals of Cyprus.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. and learned Friend expand a little on a subject not mentioned in his statement but discussed at the Council — the protected steel order with America which is slightly in the air?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In the context of the arrangement that I described, the United States proposed to impose unilateral quotas for Community semi-finished steel of 600,000 tonnes for 1986, including 200,000 tonnes reserved for supplies from the British Steel corporation to the Tuscaloosa steel company. There will be scope for additional exports under short supply provisions. The United States has also shown willingness to examine a case from companies concerned for increased access for BSC supplies to Tuscaloosa for 1987 and beyond. We shall decide whether to lift our reserve when we have had a chance to consider the implications of the latest information received.

Farmers (Exceptional Weather Aid)

4.24 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jopling): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement.

I announced on 8 October that the Government intended to provide some help for those livestock farmers who had been most seriously affected by the exceptionally bad weather conditions earlier this year and, in agreement with my agricultural colleagues, I am now in a position to announce the details.

The Government intend to make exceptional payments to farmers with suckler cows and breeding ewes in certain specified parts of the less-favoured areas, and to farmers with dairy cows in certain more limited areas.

For suckler cows and ewes, the rates of payment will be £14 and 35p per animal respectively and the areas concerned will be the less-favoured area in Scotland and throughout Northern Ireland; in England the less-favoured areas in Cumbria, Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, north Yorkshire, excluding the north Yorkshire moors, west Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear; and in Wales the original less-favoured areas in the counties of Gwynedd, Dyfed, West Glamorgan and Mid-Glamorgan and parts of the counties of Gwent, Powys and Clwyd. For dairy cows, the rate of payment will be £4·50 per animal which will be paid to dairy farmers in Cumbria, including the areas outside the less-favoured areas, in England; in Scotland, in the three regions of Strathclyde, Central and Dumfries and Galloway; and in Northern Ireland.

Those payments will be made to farmers in respect of the number of suckler cows, breeding ewes and dairy cows that they expect to have on dates which will be specified. The farmers concerned are being invited to put in their claims quickly. The agriculture Departments will endeavour to deal with them as rapidly as possible and will hope to pay a significant proportion before Christmas.

My colleagues and I recognise that the farmers in these specified areas are not the only ones badly affected by this year's adverse weather, but we believe that we have, in broad terms, selected for assistance those areas and enterprises where the situation is the most serious. In all, these payments are estimated to amount to about £16·9 million.

I am also in a position to announce the determination for hill livestock compensatory allowances for 1986. The agriculture Departments have now completed the annual autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands and, in the light of that review, my colleagues and I are proposing, subject to parliamentary approval, to increase the rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances with effect from 1 January 1986. In the old less-favoured areas, the allowances for suckler cows will be increased by £10 to £54·50, for ewes of mountain breeds by 50p to £6·75 and for other ewes by 25p to £4·50. In the new less-favoured areas the allowances for suckler cows will be increased by £5 to £27·25 and the allowances for ewes will be increased by 13p to £2·25.

In addition, we are proposing to increase the maximum payment per hectare from £60 to £62·48 in the original less-favoured areas, in accordance with the revised maximum specified in the new EC structures regulations and to make a corresponding increase, from £45 to £46·86 per hectare in the new less-favoured areas. We are also proposing to introduce some changes in the detailed rules of the scheme in the light of the new EC regulation, including a provision which will enable an HLCA applicant, subject to checks to prevent over-grazing, who afforests part of his land to take the afforested area into account for the purpose of calculating his allowances for up to 15 years.

We shall shortly be laying before Parliament a draft statutory instrument giving effect to those proposals, which are also being notified to the European Commission.

The additional HLCA payments are expected to cost £10·9 million in a full year and will represent an increase of some 11 per cent. on the existing annual HLCA payments which are currently running at about £98 million per year. That represents a significant increase in the Government's support for the hill and upland areas of the United Kingdom.

The combined cost of the weather relief measures and the increase in HLCA rates in the current financial year will be £25·3 million; £5·3 million of this will be found from savings in programmes within my responsibility and that of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Detailed changes to cash limits will be announced later. The remaining £20 million will be a charge on the reserve. Following an announcement in October that the Government were considering these matters, expenditure on such measures was in prospect and can therefore be met within the estimated outturn for the agriculture programmes in 1985-86. The cost in future years of the HLCA uprating will also be met within the totals for the agriculture programmes published in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

Because of the need to make payments to farmers urgently, expenditure for weather relief estimates at £16·9 million will be met by repayable advances from the contingencies fund pending approval of the necessary spring Supplementary Estimates.

I am pleased also to announce other changes which will help livestock farmers who are facing difficulties as a result of bad weather. In England and Wales, farmers in the areas where the special weather assistance will be payable will be exempted, until the end of March 1986, from the charges normally made by the advisory service for the analysis of hay and silage samples. In Scotland, the suspension of charging by the colleges will apply throughout the country.

Agreement has also been reached in Brussels on arrangements which will enable us to make early advance payments of sheep annual premium to less-favoured area farmers in respect of the current marketing year; and we shall hope to make most of those payments before Christmas. Advances will be paid to less-favoured area farmers who have 10 or more eligible sheep at the rate of £2·10 per ewe in Great Britain and £4·70 per ewe in Northern Ireland. This early payment will clearly be welcome to the farmers concerned.

In addition, we have been able to obtain the European Commission's agreement to some changes in the rules relating to the suckler cow premium scheme, which will help farmers who may find themselves in difficulties over maintaining their cow numbers throughout the winter because of fodder problems or abnormal losses. A separate announcement about this will be made shortly.

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his ready co-operation in making the statement. I know that he regards it as detailed, and, having heard it, I realise that we shall have some difficulty in taking in all the figures. However, the principles behind the statement are of great importance not only to the House, but to the many farmers who are desperately anxious to discover how they will feed their livestock this winter after the appalling summer. With the current bad weather, and snow coming early this year, the statement does not come a moment too soon. Indeed, the Minister should have acted earlier.

Last week, I accused the right hon. Gentleman of promising aid by the end of October. I apologise, because it was his noble Friend Lord Gray who gave us to understand that the aid would be available in weeks rather than months. We now know the converse to be true. The difficulties caused by the delay are mentioned in the final paragraph of the right hon. Gentleman's statement. He talked of

"farmers who may find themselves in difficulties over maintaining their cow numbers throughout the winter because of fodder problems".

We are content with the geography of the bad weather assistance for suckler cows and sheep, but the selection of areas for dairy cows seems somewhat bizarre. Large chunks of England, the highlands and islands of Scotland and the whole of Wales are excluded. What is the reason for that? Did not the National Farmers Union of Scotland say that the rate of £4·50 per dairy cow means that in an average herd the farmer can feed two cows during this winter?

The right hon. Gentleman said that the £4·50 would be paid on dates to be specified. Will the Minister give us as much information as possible about the dates on which he expects that the livestock will be counted? The worst affected farmers this summer have already had to sell many animals just to keep going. It is important to resolve this matter as quickly as possible.

The HLCA increase is welcome — any increase is welcome to farmers in such a predicament. However, while the addition of suckler cows restores the HLCAs in real terms, the sheep categories are not restored to the real value of the payments in 1980 and 1981 when they were introduced. There has been an erosion of about 17 to 20 per cent. in the HLCAs for hardy and less hardy ewes.

The right hon. Gentleman said that expenditure would be met out of the agricultural programmes. That means that no new money is being made available, but that £20 million will be found from the reserve and £5·3 million from the budgets of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Can the Minister tell us how that money will be divided up, where it is to be found, and why the Government have chosen to make this small economy on something that could not have been covenanted? Why does not all the money come from the contingencies fund?

At a time when the right hon. Gentleman asks the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service to be more commercial, who will pay for the costs arising from the suspension of the charges paid to ADAS for the analysis of hay and silage samples?

We welcome the announcement and consider that it will go some way towards reassuring farmers. However, the right hon. Gentleman must recognise that the delay, of which his Ministry is guilty, in responding to the exceptional weather, has led to much economic and structural hardship in the farming community.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman has asked many questions and I shall do my best to respond. I am grateful for his kind remarks at the beginning of his comments.

The hon. Gentleman said that we should have acted earlier, but, as I told the House last week, it was difficult to assess the areas that were hardest hit. We took much advice as we wished to make the best assessment of the areas for assistance.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman believed that the arrangements for bad weather aid were satisfactory for sheep and cows, but he questioned the assistance for dairy cows and asked why those areas had been selected. The advisory service's advice was that the best formula was to put the money into the areas where the dairy industry had been hardest hit.

The hon. Member asked about the dates for applications. For hill cows and sheep, we would expect 1 January to apply and for dairy cows, 1 December.

I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's welcome of the announcement about HLCAs. I thought it was a little hot that he talked airily about restoring the figures in real terms to their 1980 level, although he acknowledged that some have been restored. That comes very strange from the spokesman for a party which, between 1976, when the present arrangements were introduced, and May 1979, when they were hustled out of office, increased the payment for mountain ewes by only 50p to £4·10. For all other ewes and suckler cows, the 1976 figures remained. It is a bit offside for him to criticise us for not being generous.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I thank my right hon. Friend—and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland—for this valuable announcement. I thank him for dealing with suckler cows and breeding ewes and for bringing in dairy stock, which will be especially important to farmers in Dumfries, Galloway and Ayrshire. I thank him also for the addition to the HLCA and for his suggestion that there might be some flexibility on cow numbers, bearing in mind the severe losses caused by staggers as well as the fact that many farmers had to sell their beasts when they could no longer afford to feed them. I am glad that my right hon. Friend will consider paying the amounts as quickly as possible. Will he try to make the forms as simple as possible to speed payment?

Mr. Jopling: I am extremely grateful for my hon. Friend's generous remarks. I assure him that we intend to pay the funds as soon as we can. For that reason, we shall try to keep the forms as simple as possible, remembering that we must ensure that the scheme is properly administered.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): If we may assume that representations were made by the National Farmers Union in the highlands and islands and by the North of Scotland college of agriculture, can the Minister explain the incredible omission of those areas from the dairy cow assistance? Those areas were also hard hit by bad weather. No one argues that Strathclyde and the other regions mentioned do not deserve the funds, but why were the highlands and islands omitted?

Mr. Jopling: The right hon. Gentleman will recall that I said that the farmers who will receive assistance were not

[Mr. Jopling]

the only ones who had to cope with appalling weather. However, we have had to try to discover those who were worst affected and to concentrate on areas where the excess rainfall was highest. I appreciate the fact that other farmers had difficulties, but I believe that the hardest-hit farmers are covered by my announcement.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): My right hon. Friend will be aware that Conservative Members who have many farming constituents, who contribute so much to Britain, will welcome his announcement not just of the increase in HLCAs, but of the exceptional weather payments, especially since the latter have been extended to dairy cows on lower land, not just in less-favoured areas. From the mass of figures that he produced today, can he tell the House what it means in cash terms to average farmers, of whom there are many in his constituency and in mine?

Mr. Jopling: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's generous remarks. Some of the figures are difficult to apply to the average farmer, but perhaps I could illustrate it by saying that a farmer with 40 hill cows and 500 sheep would obtain about £700 extra through the bad weather package.

Mr. Thomas Torney (Bradford, South): Would not the adverse weather conditions have provided an opportunity to use some of our massive stocks of cereals as animal fodder, even if we had to give it away to the farmers? Does the Minister agree that that would have been a great saving to British taxpayers, who at present pay a colossal sum just to store the grain, which many people say is completely useless?

Mr. Jopling: Perhaps it has slipped the hon. Gentleman's memory that some time ago we made available some grain in Northern Ireland to meet exactly the point that he raised. The main difficulty in the areas that I mentioned is not a shortage of grain or of high-energy diet foodstuffs, but a shortage of fodder, or high-fibre products such as hay and silage. Therefore, we were right not to operate in the way that he suggested, but to have done what we did.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): If the farmers of Banff and Buchan cannot have a loaf, I am sure that they will be happy to accept a crumb. Farmers in Scotland lost £150 million because of the severe weather, and a similar crisis exists now. However, I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement on the HLCAs. Will he try to make the HLCA and less-favoured area payments sooner rather than later, bearing in mind the fact that we are about to enter the worst period of weather in Scotland?

Mr. Jopling: I do not know by what my hon. Friend sets his standards and how he would define a loaf and a crumb. All that I can say is that £16·9 million for bad weather assistance and a £10·9 million addition to the HLCAs is, in the view of most reasonable people, much more than a crumb. In reply to my hon. Friend's specific question, I recognise that farmers have cash flow problems. To help with those, we are considering making advance HLCA payments to eligible farmers in Great Britain early in the new year, and we shall announce details of that as soon as possible.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I welcome the Minister's long overdue statement. Although it sounded complicated, does he agree that many of its provisions were what the farming unions demanded at the beginning, and that even the areas—with the notable omission of the highlands and islands—are those which were predicted? Is the delay partly attributable to the fact that the Minister lost his battle with the Treasury and obtained only about two thirds of the money that he sought, and is now seeking to dress it up by linking the statement with the annual hill farming review, which simply restores in real terms much-needed money to the HLCAs?

Perhaps I did not hear the Minister correctly, but I understood him to say that the dates at which the livestock will be counted are December this year and January next year. Does he agree that that will not properly compensate farmers who have had to sell cows and sheep to solve their cash flow problems, and are not they the people whom the measures should help?

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman must not indulge in wishful thinking and try to read into the arrangements what he hoped would happen. We were right to consider the problem of hill land and the difficulties caused by the overall profitability, which was part of the autumn review, with the effects of the appalling weather. It was right to assess those together, so that we could get the whole picture and to give us a little time to evaluate the weather later in the autumn before we made this announcement. When we had a broader picture, we could provide a better solution.

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): While recognising the many problems associated with the special schemes, may I ask the Minister how much weather relief is likely to go to Scotland, how many beneficiaries there will be, and what the average payment will be? In view of the Government's philosophy on selective assistance, will a means test be applied?

Mr. Jopling: I am afraid that I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman without notice how much will go to Scotland. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is here and if the hon. Gentleman puts a question to my right hon. Friend, I am sure tht it will be answered.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. Friend the Minister recounted a long list of areas, but I did not hear Cleveland mentioned. I wonder how wet it has to be in Cleveland before that area is added to Durham, Northumberland and all the other areas mentioned in the statement. Farmers in my constituency have suffered just as much as others and there is no reason why they should be overlooked merely because Cleveland is a small county.

Mr. Jopling: I admitted in my statement that there would be some hon. Members whose farmers have suffered weather difficulties and that my colleagues would claim that they should have assistance as well. I recognise the difficulty expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) but I believe that the Government have to face my hon. Friend's potential criticism in an endeavour to help those farmers who have been worst hit.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Can the Minister clarify the policy to extend payments to areas that have been forested and can he say whether any acreage limits will

apply to HLCA payments? Will he confirm that the new arrangements will mean that HLCA payments and forestry commission grants will apply to the same area?

Mr. Jopling: I cannot go further than the comments that I made in my earlier statement on afforestation. That is a technical matter and the hon. Gentleman should re-read my statement and study the words that were very carefully chosen. He will then realise what their effect will be.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Minister has been successful in giving £17 million of extra money to the home livestock industry because of the exceptionally bad weather. If there is exceptionally good weather next will it be the Minister's policy to reduce subsidies? Can he say whether the Government have any plans to extend this new, generous policy to the ice cream salesmen of Southend and to the landladies of Blackpool, who are suffering severe cash flow problems and have had a disastrous year because of the inclement weather?

Mr. Jopling: It crossed my mind that my hon. Friend might be in the House when I made my statement. I confess that I was bemused as to what form of question he might have put to me, if, instead of finding another seat in the House representing Scotland, he had been re-elected to the House in a constituency with many upland hill farmers.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Minister's answer to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) about the date of eligibility for payment mean that farmers who have already had to dispose of stock will not receive compensation or assistance? If the Minister has difficulty in understanding the difference between a crumb and a loaf, he should consider the view of the National Farmers Union of Scotland that the loss caused by the bad weather amounted to about £200 million. The Minister's additional money for the industry is only one tenth of the sum for the whole of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jopling: I do not think that I have ever pretended, and nor have farmers asked, that the assistance that we were able to offer in these circumstances would fully make up for the losses that have been suffered. Farmers recognise that the commercial business of farming is hazardous and depends much on the weather. All that the payment is intended to be is a contribution to those farmers in the most difficulty.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Can the Minister explain to the House and to the taxpayer why those who expect to be helped by the taxpayer in adverse times should not equally be expected to repay that money to the taxpayer when times are more favourable?

Mr. Jopling: My hon. Friend will know that there is an annual review of the incomes of hill farmers. We conducted that inquiry at the end of October and the beginning of November in the normal and traditional way, and all matters are taken into account.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the Minister accept that many of the Ayrshire farmers, whom I have the honour to represent —many of whom are not as well off as Southend ice cream salesmen—have lost at least a quantifiable £20 million? Ayrshire farmers will consider £16·9 million—which is, after all, only 10 days' expenditure in the Falkland Islands at the present rate—to be too little, too late.

Will the Minister admit that there will be cuts in his budget and in the budget of the Secretary of State for Scotland to pay for this aid?

It is all very well for the Minister to say that claims will be met quickly, but the red tape of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland and the Ministry is well known to the farmers. How will the Minister ensure that the bulk of the money is paid before December, before some of my constituents go bankrupt?

Mr. Jopling: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said, he would realise that the Government are intending to make weather assistance payments as early as we can and we hope to pay a substantial amount of this aid before Christmas. He would have heard also that we are hoping to make advance payments on the hill land compensatory amounts.

If the hon. Gentleman considers the part of my statement in which I told the House that the Government are hoping to make early advances on the annual ewe payments of £2·10 per ewe, I think that he will realise that it is unfair to suggest that the Government are not fully aware of the cash flow problems that beset farmers. We are taking positive steps to remedy the problems in the three ways I have mentioned.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Will my right hon. Friend say what help will be provided by his statement for the primary producers, fodder producers — [HON. MEMBERS: "What about steel?"] — and hay producers who are producing an unsubsidised crop—unlike steel producers? Primary producers are facing the greatest cash flow problems of all.

Mr. Jopling: I suspect that my hon. Friend is speaking on behalf of his constituents in Stirling, and I am aware of their problems. As I have said, it has not been possible to satisfy all farmers. The Government have had to concentrate on the worst hit and I believe that under the terms of the statement, a good many farmers in Stirling will receive assistance.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Is the Minister aware that the rainfall in Ayrshire was exceptional and was 250 per cent. above average? As a result, much of the harvest remained unharvested and that which was harvested resulted in the ground being badly cut up. Will the Minister consider, at this late stage, a one-off reseeding, drainage and liming grant?

Mr. Jopling: I think the Government have done well considering the difficulties we have faced. I have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I can make no promises that the Government will move in that direction.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): As my right hon. Friend the Minister knows, I represent the underprivileged housing schemes of Perthshire and Kinross-shire. I congratulate the Minister—this is meant to be a compliment — on the surprisingly generous, although disappointingly small, sum. I suggest that the Minister takes action to ensure that most of the weather fund goes to Scotland as that was the worst hit area. Much of that fund should be spent on transporting, and not necessarily paying for, the ground crops of hay and other commodities which were grown in England, upon which

[Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn]

God smiled more kindly. I ask my right hon. Friend to ensure that that is done before farmers find themselves caught in the appalling spiral of the sale of beasts at low prices with consequential and damaging effects on ploughing, seeding and agricultural machinery for years to come.

Mr. Jopling: I am surprised that my hon. and learned Friend has not heard the loud pleas of my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), who has been drawing our attention continually to the problems of farmers in his area. I am surprised, too, that my hon. and learned Friend should say that all the aid should be directed to Scotland. I believe that we have dealt with the problem fairly. Those who represent seats in Northern Ireland, for example, have been drawing our attention to the difficulties that farmers are facing in the Province.

Mr. John: I am authorised to say that all the hill farmers of Glasgow, Cathcart, the constituency which the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) formerly represented, are ecstatic at the aid which the Government are making available.

It is important to know how the Departments will slice up the £5·3 million of programme savings between them, what programmes will be hit and how ADAS is to be compensated for forgoing the charges that it makes normally for the tests that it carries out.

Mr. Jopling: I think that it would be better to answer in detail the hon. Gentleman's question about the finding of the £5·3 million, and I am not able to do so now. For the current year, my ministerial colleagues and I will be contributing some modest savings. As I explained in my statement, £20 million of the costs of the package will be a charge on the reserves.

Tobacco-Related Diseases

5.2 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the publication of the World Health Organisation's report on the incidence of death from lung cancer and other tobacco-related diseases in Scotland."

The matter is obviously specific, because the report states that Glasgow has the second highest incidence in the world of death from lung cancer and other tobacco-related diseases. It is followed closely and tragically by Dundee, Aberdeen and various other areas of Scotland. The issue is extremely specific.

The importance of the matter can hardly be over-emphasised. I do not want to detain you, Mr. Speaker, or the House in emphasising the importance of the issue, which must be self-evident to all who have read the report.

The urgency of the need to debate the matter is a topic on which I shall dwell for two minutes only. A debate is crucial, for the simple and tragic reason that the Greater Glasgow health board and four other area health boards in Scotland have been told by the Secretary of State for Scotland that, because they are refusing to become involved in the privatisation of the three ancillary services, they must reduce Health Service spending by 10 per cent. That will amount to £9 million for the Greater Glasgow health board.

The matter is urgent because it is a disgrace that the health of the people of Scotland should be used as a battering ram or bludgeon to force health boards into something that they do not want to do, which involves giving away their services to private companies whose services have been found wanting.

The report of the World Health Organisation makes serious statements on the incidence of death from lung cancer and other tobacco-related diseases in Scottish cities, and accordingly I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the findings of the report of the World Health Organisation on the incidence of death from lung cancer and other tobacco-related diseases in Scotland."

I appreciate fully the importance of the matter that the hon. Gentleman has brought to the attention of the House and I have listened carefully to what he has said. I regret that I do not consider that the matter that he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Privilege

5.5 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It was reported recently in the *Glasgow Herald* that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) had complained to you as a matter of privilege about undue pressure being put on him when

a Mr. Ian Lawson was threatening to stand against him unless he changed his view on Gartcosh. Can you tell us how you will communicate your decision?

Mr. Speaker: I do not communicate matters of that sort. The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) raised the issue with me and I am dealing with it.

Ministerial Statements

5.6 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There is a clear trend for Opposition spokesmen, when dealing with ministerial statements, themselves to make statements, which are sometimes as long as, if not longer than the Minister's.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): They are usually better as well.

Sir Russell Johnston: Indeed, as was the case this afternoon with the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and the Foreign Secretary. I ask, Mr. Speaker, that you give this new development some consideration. Is there any way in which these Opposition spokesmen can be restrained?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has raised a matter which the entire House understands, but there is no way in which the Chair can influence the length of replies to statements or speeches. The Chair will be unable to do so at least until the matter is brought before the Procedure Committee.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I ask you to clarify the statement that you have just made and the advice contained within it. If you feel unable to curb the length of questions and statements asked or made by those who occupy the official Opposition Front Bench, would you feel similarly unable to curb the length of statements or questions made or asked by the spokesman of other parties?

Mr. Speaker: There is the convention in the House relating to Her Majesty's Government and Her Majesty's Opposition. There has always been discretion to allow slightly longer questions from members of the official Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was called when the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was answering questions on the statement that he made. I think the hon. Gentleman will find that when there are questions on statements, Liberal Members and Social Democratic Members are always called. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has any complaint.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR MONDAY 16 DECEMBER

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Trevor Skeet
Mr. Peter Thomas
Mr. Mark Hughes

BILL PRESENTED

GAS

Mr. Secretary Walker, supported by The Prime Minister, Mr. Secretary Brittan, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Hurd, Mr. Secretary Younger, Mr. Secretary Edwards, Mr. Secretary Baker, Mr. Kenneth Clarke, Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith, Mr. Alastair Goodlad and Mr. David Hunt, presented a Bill to provide for the appointment and functions of a Director General of Gas Supply and the establishment and functions of a Gas Users' Council; to abolish the privilege conferred on the British Gas Council by section 29 of the Gas Act 1972; to make new provision with respect to the supply of gas through pipes and certain related matters; to provide for the vesting of the property, rights and liabilities of the British Gas Corporation in a company nominated by the Secretary of State and the subsequent dissolution of that Corporation; to make provision with respect to, and to information furnished in connection with, agreements relating to the initial supply of gas won under the authority of a petroleum licence; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

Orders of the Day

Housing (Scotland) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

5.9 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. George Younger): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The main objectives of the Bill are to extend further our successful right-to-buy policy, by bringing new categories of tenants into the right to buy for the first time, and by increasing discount for large numbers of tenants living in flats. The Bill also aims to improve and simplify the building control system, by cutting down on unnecessary bureaucracy. The measure is in tune with a number of key elements of the Government's programme: it extends individual rights and freedom, it encourages wider ownership of wealth and property, it promotes the privatisation of large local authority estates, and it aims to cut out red tape. I believe that in all these respects it meets the aspirations of tenants and of the public at large, and I trust that the House will give it support.

Our housing policy has a number of important objectives. First, we have sought to provide a greater freedom of choice in housing matters. Secondly, we have encouraged a variety of housing provision and types of tenure. Thirdly, we have aimed to make more diverse and human the monolithic and unpopular council estates, which have long been a dispiriting feature of public housing in Scotland. With these objectives in mind, it would be appropriate if I were to comment on the campaign which, as hon. Members will know, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has launched today to publicise its case for additional investment in public sector stock.

I agree that councils face problems in alleviating disrepair, condensation and dampness, for example, in their housing stock, but let us not get the problems out of perspective. Over 80 per cent. of all council stock has either been built within the past 15 years or has been rehabilitated or modernised.

Recently, much was made of the English report which suggested that £18·8 billion was needed south of the border for housing renovation and repairs. I understand that COSLA suggests that the equivalent Scottish figure is £7 billion, or twice as much per house as in England. I believe that this COSLA figure is substantially exaggerated. We have recognised that much work needs to be done and have increased the authorities' capital allocations this year for work on their own stock by over £50 million, or nearly a quarter, but our policies are designed to tackle the problem in a sensible and properly programmed way. COSLA seems to believe that the answer to all problems is just to throw money at them.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I am sorry to interrupt the Minister just as he was about to fling money at the problem. In view of his assertion that the COSLA estimate is excessive, why has he refused to grant a housing condition survey in Scotland, which would be an independent inquiry into the condition of houses in our country?

Mr. Younger: My judgment is that a housing condition survey would cover a small sample and as such would provide no new information. We understand that there is a major problem to be tackled, but it should be tackled within our resources, and we shall do so in a proper, sensible and programmed manner. That is what I am trying to suggest today.

Let us remember, however, that many of the difficulties with housing today result from the spend, spend, spend policy of the 1960s and 1970s. COSLA is silent about the benefits that can be, and are being, obtained by increasing people's freedom of choice through, for example, the right to buy. Our efforts have been focused on increasing people's opportunities to own their own homes. Surveys have shown that owner-occupation is far and away the preferred form of tenure for the majority of people.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Before the Minister plunges into the main part of his address, I wish to question him a little further about his remarks on the COSLA survey. He has given the impression that there is no need for a housing condition survey in Scotland because we all agree that there is a problem. However, only a few minutes earlier he made some slighting remarks about the need to get the problem into perspective and suggested that COSLA had greatly exaggerated the matter. There is a serious disagreement, and surely it would be sensible to have the housing condition survey so that we can know what the argument is about and the scale of the problem. Will the Minister comment on the fact that the COSLA document, which he is attacking, has been supported and signed by a selection of district councils which are under Conservative control?

Mr. Younger: We must work out whether such a suggestion would achieve any benefit. A survey equivalent to that done south of the border would cover only 900 houses. Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on whether a sample of 900 houses throughout Scotland—with a lot of effort put into drawing conclusions and extrapolating them from that survey—would tell us anything apart from what we already know? Does the hon. Gentleman think that it would show that there were no problems and no need for the rehabilitation of housing?

We know that there is a vast amount to be done. We do not need a new survey, on a minor basis, to tell us something which we already know. We ought to expend our energies on putting the maximum resources into solving the problems. The hon. Gentleman should reflect on that. Although I can see the cosmetic advantage of announcing a housing condition survey, it would be quite pointless and a waste of time.

Our right-to-buy policy has been a massive success. When we took office in 1979, under 35 per cent. of houses in Scotland were owner-occupied, and this figure had hardly changed from the previous decade. Now the number of households in Scotland which own their own home is over 40 per cent. This is a major change in a little over five years.

The Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 gave many people their first opportunity of turning into reality their aspirations to own their own home. Since the Act came into force, almost 75,000 houses have been sold by district councils, the new towns and the Scottish Special Housing Association. What is more, nearly 7,000 sales are at an earlier stage in the process. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) will no doubt attempt to evade the issue by claiming that the right to buy is of interest only to a minority of tenants who have bought or who are in the process of buying. I believe that any hon. Member who makes that point has misjudged the situation and is out of touch with the feelings of tenants. The right-to-buy policy has been a success with tenants who have bought or are in the process of buying and with tenants who may have no immediate intention of buying but who nevertheless welcome the fact that they have the right to buy their home at a reasonable price in the future.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Is it not a tribute to the success of our housing policy in Scotland that the Opposition have radically altered their policy on the right to buy?

Mr. Younger: I hope that my hon. Friend's assumption is right and that her optimistic hopes will be fulfilled, because that would be a tribute to our policy.

One of the most important facts about sales is that they release resources for re-use by councils for the benefit of other tenants. This year, councils in Scotland will be able to spend more than £100 million from sales, which is money which would not otherwise be available. It is a massive injection of extra money to help authorities to deal with housing need.

In line with our objective of extending opportunities for tenants to buy their homes, clause 1 will extend the right to buy to tenants of registered housing associations. These tenants have previously enjoyed security of tenure under the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, as well as the other benefits of the tenants' charter. However, they have not been able to buy their homes except at the discretion of their landlord.

For some time we have been unhappy about the way in which the housing association movement in general has been operating the voluntary sales policy. Up to March 1985, housing associations had sold only 83 homes to their tenants, 60 of them at a discount. This is a small proportion of the association's total general needs stock. The movement is now well established in Scotland, and the arguments which led us to exclude housing association tenants from the original 1980 legislation, which were that Scottish associations were less well developed than English associations and thus less able to divert their energies to sales no longer carry such force, as the movement has gained in maturity and associations have acquired more stock.

Housing associations have been given every opportunity to prove that a voluntary sales policy could work, but a number of associations have chosen to adopt policies which preclude sales while others, with positive sales policies, are unwilling to offer discount. We have therefore come to the conclusion that tenants of registered housing associations can no longer be denied the rights which are enjoyed by other public sector tenants in Scotland, and indeed by housing association tenants in England and Wales. It is especially relevant that housing association tenants in England and Wales have had the right to buy since 1980. Suggestions that the movement would be seriously weakened as a result have proved totally unfounded, and I do not see why the case should be any different in Scotland. Some 30,000 housing association tenants will stand to benefit from this new right.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations would contest what he has just said. Why has there been no consultation with that federation for about a year and a half?

Mr. Younger: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is right. There has been frequent contact between my hon. Friends, myself and my Department with the housing association movement and the Housing Corporation. I do not know that they would all necessarily disagree with many of the things that I have said. I appreciate and understand the excellent work that housing associations have done. I am a great admirer of that movement, but feel sad that tenants in housing association properties are precluded from the right to buy their homes, which have been built substantially with public money, such as other tenants have. We should not lightly deny them that right.

Clause 1 also extends security of tenure and the right to buy to tenants of regional councils, police authorities and fire authorities. I recognise that there are houses which those authorities need to retain for operational purposes, such as houses which are being held temporarily, pending development, or houses which they need to let to employees in connection with their work with the authority. Provision is made in the legislation to exclude houses of these types from the right to buy. When houses do not fall into these categories, we have again come to the view that it is difficult to defend not extending to tenants of regional councils the right to buy their homes on the same terms as other public sector tenants in Scotland, and indeed as tenants of comparable authorities south of the border. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House will have had representations, some of them strong, from constituents who feel greatly disadvantaged by being denied that right.

Clause 2 provides that the discount to which a tenant is entitled under the right to buy will be increased by 10 per cent. when the dwellinghouse being purchased is a flat. The purchaser will be entitled to discount at a new minimum level of 42 per cent. after two years, rising to 70 per cent. after 30 years. We have been concerned that flats, which account for almost half the Scottish public sector stock, have been selling more slowly than other types of houses. When we undertook research into sales, it became clear that tenants of flats were being deterred from buying by the thought of expenses which might affect the purchase after sale, such as common repairs. It seemed to us fair that the sale price of flats should reflect these additional responsibilities—480,000 households stand to benefit from this change, if they decide to buy.

Clause 3 provides that the rule under which discount may be restricted on newly built houses will be relaxed, by bringing forward the cut-off date from 15 May 1975 to 31 December 1978. I accept that landlords should not, in general, be required to sell houses under the right to buy at less than the outstanding debt. I believe, however, that the date can now be moved forward to the end of 1978 without breaching this principle. The advantages are that authorities will be spared the need to carry out complex financial calculations, knowing that, in the majority of cases, the outstanding debt would be likely to be less than the selling price, and an area of uncertainty is removed for tenants.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Can I take my right hon. Friend back to what he said about the difficulties concerning flats and the additional costs that tenants who become owner-occupiers will encounter for maintenance? I welcome the increased discounts, but does not the difficulty experienced in selling flats suggest that valuers are setting too high a price on them, as they are not taking account of those maintenance costs and future obligations?

Mr. Younger: I see my hon. Friend's point. It is difficult for a layman, even a Secretary of State, to question the professional judgment of valuers. It would be rather easier in many respects if we could. It appears strange that valuations do not to some extent reflect the burdens on purchasers. I hope, however, that the proposed change in the Bill will go some way to right what some tenants regard as a potential liability which they are unwilling to risk.

Clause 3 also provides that discount may be restricted when a house was modernised after the new cut-off date of 31 December 1978. We have received representations from a range of authorities in recent years that they should not be required to sell recently modernised houses at less than the debt outstanding on that work. There is evidence that some authorities were thinking twice about modernising houses which they believed might be sold. We concluded that it would be better for landlords and tenants alike if we made sensible provision for the treatment of modernisation costs in the legislation. I hope that tenants will accept that that is fair.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): There appears to be an anomaly in Scotland, because tenants of public authority housing cannot have their time as tenants taken into consideration when calculating discount, as happens in England. In England, tenants of the Inland Revenue, for example, can have that time taken into account. The Bill does not appear to remove that anomaly. Will the right hon. Gentleman consider it?

Mr. Younger: I had not met that point about the Inland Revenue. I shall be glad to consider it. No doubt it can be arranged in Committee if the hon. Gentleman thinks that it is worth pursuing.

Clauses 4 to 6 will give the Secretary of State new powers to intervene on behalf of tenants whose landlords might be putting difficulties in the way of purchase. The powers are necessary because some landlords seem ready to go to extreme lengths to frustrate and discourage potential purchasers. Most hon. Members will have had strong representation on that, too.

Clause 4 will enable the Secretary of State to make directions requiring landlords not to include certain conditions in offers to sell when the Secretary of State is satisfied that such conditions would be unreasonable.

Clause 5 will enable the Secretary of State to give financial and other assistance to purchasers involved in actual or prospective court proceedings against their landlord in connection with the right to buy.

Clause 6 strengthens my existing powers to require landlords to provide information concerning right-to-buy sales. When this is necessary to help me intervene on behalf of tenants. I should perhaps mention here that the Bill also places a new requirement on landlords, under schedule 1, not to induce tenants to enter into agreements which purport to restrict that person's right to buy. This is directed at the type of agreement which Glasgow district council requires its tenants to sign, before houses are modernised, to the effect that the tenant will not exercise

his right to buy for a period of years, or if he does seek to buy, will repay to the landlord a proportion of the modernisation costs. This also has caused a great deal of annoyance for potential buyers in Glasgow.

Clause 7 will enable me to contribute towards the cost of schemes to make it easier for tenants to move to a house in a different authority's area. Clause 8 requires registered housing associations to make rules governing allocations. Clause 9 strengthens local authorities' lending powers.

Clause 10 restores a ground for recovery of possession, where a landlord wishes to transfer the tenancy following the breakdown of a marriage or other relationship. The suggestion that it would be helpful to restore this ground came in a report from the Institute of Housing. We consulted widely on this proposal during the summer, in fulfilment of undertakings given to the House during the passage of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill. There was unanimous support for the proposal and we concluded that it would be appropriate to proceed.

Clause 11 and schedule 1 amend and clarify further aspects of the right to buy and other rights of public sector tenants. Experience of operating the right to buy has suggested a number of ways in which the scheme might be amended to remove anomalies and make it easier for tenants to purchase, and to ease the administrative burden on landlords. A number of proposals are set out in schedule 1. In particular, the provisions governing qualifying time for the right to buy and for discount are clarified.

In addition, the period within which a person who purchases his house under the right to buy is liable to repay all or a proportion of the discount received is reduced from five to three years. Suggestions that this will encourage tenants to take a quick profit on the purchase of their house are totally unfounded. Research has shown that the vast majority of tenants who buy their houses intend to continue living in them for a considerable period. Where tenants require to move, however, for job or other reasons, the present rules on repayment of discount represent an unnecessary barrier to mobility. We have concluded that it would now be reasonable, in the light of experience of operating the right to buy, that the rules should be relaxed.

Clauses 12 and 13 will overcome certain difficulties being experienced by housing associations.

Clause 18 amends the system of building control. Scotland's distinctive building control system has served us well over the years. Following a comprehensive review and wide public consultation, I concluded that the system, while basically sound, could benefit from the introduction of some measures designed to produce simpler and more efficient arrangements, in keeping with present-days needs. These were set out in my statement of intent on the future of building control in November last year.

The clause also deals with changes which require primary legislation. Its provisions will allow exclusion from the full requirements of the building standards regulations of a range of small additions to buildings—for example, porches, car ports and lean-to greenhouses —where developers, householders and local authorities alike would benefit from a lighter hand on the controls.

Similarly, the powers in the clause to introduce a measure of self-certification of design and a system of class warrants for standard building types will eliminate unnecessary administrative effort and generally speed up the process of obtaining a building warrant for the kind of work involved. The more flexible fee arrangements which I am seeking will, in particular, enable me to exempt from building control fees work carried out wholly for the benefit of disabled people, allowing the disabled in Scotland to enjoy a concession already available to them in England and Wales, and this will be welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): In relation to clause 18, does the right hon. Gentleman recall that the Government issued a consultative document on building regulations in 1982-83? May we have an assurance that the terms of clause 18 will not in any way presume to lay down the standards that the Government sought to lay down in that consultative document, for they represented appalling reductions in the sizes of rooms, kitchens and so on? If he will give that assurance, the whole of Scotland will be satisfied.

Mr. Younger: I am glad that I can give the hon. Gentleman that assurance. Space regulations and the like will be dealt with separately. They are not altered by or reflected in this measure.

In different ways, these measures take further the process we have already started of cutting out bureaucracy, encouraging the privatisation of public assets and extending opportunities for home ownership. We are fast approaching the situation when, for the first time in many years, fewer than half of all homes in Scotland will be rented from the public sector. Our policies have led to a major transformation of the housing scene in one of the largest transfers of assets from state agencies to private individuals in modern times. The right to buy has undoubtedly been a major factor in this change.

I come to the point that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley). I hope that during the debate we shall receive a clear statement about where the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and the Opposition stand on this matter of the right to buy. I hope that he will give a clear and unequivocal statement that his party fully supports the right to buy — this important right for tenants. Such a statement would be welcomed by the vast majority of tenants in Scotland.

I fear, however, that we may end the debate without having received such a statement, and I shall be disappointed if that proves to be the case. I hope that the hon. Member for Garscadden will not say that he is not opposed to sales in principle, but he believes that it should be left to the discretion of individual landlords to decide their positions. He cannot leave the debate today without making his position clear on that central point of the Bill.

The public will not be misled by any fainthearted proposals that it should be left to landlords to make their own choices. After all, local authorities had a discretion to sell houses before we introduced the right to buy, and we know how few houses were sold and what tremendous efforts were made by many landlords and local authorities in those days to avoid selling to many tenants who desperately wanted the opportunity to buy.

We require from the hon. Member for Garscadden a clear statement on whether the Labour party in Scotland is or is not in favour of the right to buy. Can tenants in Scotland look forward, should there ever be another Labour Government, to having the right to buy their homes? The hon. Gentleman is a straightforward person,

[Mr. Younger]

who will have come to the debate with a voluminous brief. I hope that it contains a carefully drawn up set of words which will satisfy me, so that I shall know exactly where the Labour party stands on this matter.

The Government have a real commitment to extending freedom of choice and to spreading wealth and ownership as widely as possible. The Bill will extend that process still further, and I have no hesitation in commending it to the House.

5.37 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I must tell the Secretary of State that it has never been my political ambition to satisfy him, and I fear that he may yet be disappointed again, as he has so often been in his political career. He has had many bitter disappointments of late as Cabinet reshuffles have proceeded. However, I assure him that I shall discuss the Bill in depth, and he will welcome that serious and proper approach.

I begin on a happier note. I wish to offer, even in his absence, my congratulations to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on his election as chairman of the Conservative Scottish group. It is always good to see an hon. Member rising with the popular vote of his colleagues, and it is particularly touching when some of them travelled so far to support him. It is a tribute to his tact that he has decently absented himself from the field of triumph this evening. We shall watch him at work with interest in the months ahead.

I know that the hon. Gentleman will read our comments about him in *Hansard*, so I must add that there is a note of caution on the Opposition Benches. The question being asked is whether the hon. Member for Tayside, North is doing too much. After all, he has great responsibility as his leader's personal representative in defence matters in Scotland. To take on that along with the chairmanship of the Conservative group must give rise to some anxiety. We can only wonder how so small a figure and so modest a frame can shoulder such daunting responsibilities.

At the same time, we offer sympathy to the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who has momentarily left the Chamber. I feel sorry for him because we have all on occasions tasted electoral defeat. It must have been particularly wounding to discover himself being passed backwards and forwards between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the House during this afternoon's proceedings as though he were an unwanted brown paper parcel. I hope that at some point he again finds a home in the Scottish Conservative party.

Having properly recognised those dramatic happenings, I come to the Bill—the centerpiece, I understand, of the Government's legislative programme in Scotland, the height of their creative, imaginative endeavour in the Queen's Speech.

In the recent reshuffle, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), was stripped of half his kingdom. For example, he lost home affairs, doubtless in the hope that better things would emerge from him by narrowing his area of responsibility. But sadly, the end product is this Bill, which seems to be nothing more than an apology and a non-event. Although we shall consider it very carefully in Committee, we cannot give it a very warm welcome.

Schedule 1 alone would be the subject of a good Committee stage. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) will be very active in that respect. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will be able to answer my next question. It involves not a political point but merely a matter of machinery. As he knows, the amendments to the Housing Associations Bill 1985 form one of the important bases of the Bill. Clauses 12 to 15 are cast entirely in terms of amendments to that legislation. But, of course, that Bill has not yet been printed. It is not a case of it being hard to get hold of; it does not even exist. To find out what is in that legislation one has to go back to a Bill from the last session, Bill No. 198, and one has to look at column 1564 of the Lords *Hansard* for 30 October and translate the 16 amendments recorded there into Bill No. 198. I suppose that one might then have something that approximates to the measure that we are invited to amend. It is extremely inconvenient.

Today, I tried to make inquiries through the Library as to whether the 1985 Act would be available soon, but no one seemed to know. Will the Minister give us a guarantee that the Committee stage will not start until the 1985 Act has become available? It is ludicrous to try to draft amendments or to try to understand the subtleties of some of the changes when we do not have the basic statute available in any form.

I should like to know where the Bill comes from and why we are being lumbered with it. There have been all sorts of rumours about that, and I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) in his place. One of the rumours is that it is an essential part of the Edinburgh, West survival kit for the next election. That has a some plausibility to it. To be fair, the hon. Gentleman has pursued this issue enthusiastically. I understand that he has been under pressure from some of his constituents who might be thought to have an interest in the matter. He has been demonstrably unhappy, and on several occasions the corridors of Westminster have been filled with a persistent but well-bred bleat as he has expressed his distress. We are told that in Barnton people feel very strongly about these matters. Of course, if a Member of Parliament has a majority that has fallen to about 500, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): Is not the hon. Gentleman aware that I introduced the Bill well before the election? Indeed, the leaders of every party voted on that Bill and expressed themselves clearly. But I introduced the Bill before the election and the electoral result had nothing to do with it.

Mr. Dewar: It shakes one's faith in the ethical standards of public schools to hear the hon. Gentleman saying that with such immense and disingenuous authority. But, to be fair, there are other possible explanations, such as ideology and prejudice. The one that I favour is that the Bill has been introduced because the Government could not think of anything better to do. There was almost nothing for Scotland in the Gracious Speech, and I suppose that there had to be something. But the Secretary of State's explanation was not entirely convincing.

We know that in the 1980 legislation no right to buy was offered to housing association tenants. In 1984 there was quite important amending legislation. In that year there was a specific Bill to amend the Tenants' Rights,

Etc. (Scotland) Act. Again, there was no extension to housing association tenants. Indeed, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West moved an amendment that was resisted by the Minister in quite interesting terms. The Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South, said:

"So far, there has been no clear indication of extensive interest by tenants in purchasing their houses, except in the case of the Link housing association, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West referred." — [*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee:* 8 December 1983, c. 402.]

Therefore, at the end of 1983 the Minister conceded that there was no interest outside that little group of keen financial people in Barnton. There was no discernible interest in sitting tenants buying their housing association properties. We must ask whether there has been any evidence since then of a great growth of interest. I suspect that the answer is no.

Most of us who have read the briefings sent to us know that on 27 August 1984 — quite recent history — the Secretary of State opened Glasgow's 10,000th rehabilitated house in, I believe, Shettleston. As my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) will know, it had a nameplate on the door saying "John Wheatley". But the ironic comment that that embodied seemed to pass the Secretary of State by. I doubt whether he will be remembered as a great architect of enlightened housing legislation, but he opened that house, and in the following press conference he made one point perfectly clear. According to the housing journal, he "reaffirmed his belief" in the voluntary code and went on to say that there was

"no need to introduce legislation."

Thus, at the end of 1983 Ministers conceded that there was no interest in the measure. In August 1984 the Secretary of State made it crystal clear that he had no intention of pursuing the legislative path and totally backed the voluntary code. No real explanation has been offered for this volte face. In the Bill, we have a statement of bold Conservative policy, but that is not enough. We are entitled to examine the practical consequences of what is being suggested.

If it is not thought unfair, I believe that we should take this legislation seriously today to see what will happen if it is implemented. Consequently, I shall ask a series of constructive questions which the Under-Secretary of State will no doubt deal with at the end of the debate. I understand that the discount for housing association tenants will be based on their public sector tenancy prior to becoming housing association tenants, or their tenancy of the housing association property which they want to buy subsequent to the passing of this Bill.

Thus, in a year's time, when the legislation comes into operation, we may find that Mr. X, who has spent five years as a district council tenant and who has been nominated for a housing association flat, has moved in. He will immediately become eligible for a discount of about 50 per cent. if he wants to buy. Mr. Y, who lives in the same close, may have lived in and paid rent for his flat for 20 years before any improvement to it. If he then becomes a housing association tenant it may be thought that he is morally in a very strong position. But at that point he will be eligible for no discount whatever, because he will have no previous history of being a public sector tenant. What is the justice or logic in that? But it is certainly a consequence of this legislaton. One man would have a substantial right to discount and the other would have none, and would be starting from scratch. That is a rather perverse result, to say the least.

The confusion grows. Once the right to discount has been earned by Mr. Y, just as it exists, rather surprisingly, for Mr. X, he will want to know what it amounts to. I understand that the fixed price would be not less than the outstanding debt or the market value, whichever is the less, if the house has been improved or rehabilitated after 31 December 1978. That means the vast majority of housing association improved property in Scotland. Thus the discount cannot take the purchase price to the tenant below the outstanding existing debt. That is extraordinary, because in practice it means that the debt will often be above the market price and so there will be no discount.

Therefore, we are offering a rather peculiarly weighted discount package, which will not apply to many tenants. It will help the constituents of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West because their houses were built long before 1978. However, the vast majority of ordinary tenants will say, "I am entitled to a 50 per cent. discount," but will find that they are entitled to no such thing. Even if there were a gap between the market valuation and the book debt, it would almost certainly be only small, which would squeeze the discount.

Let us assume that a flat is valued at £20,000, and the tenant has a discount of 50 per cent. He will think that he can buy the flat for £10,000—I have looked into the matter and these are typical and plausible figures—but there may be a book debt of £18,000, in which case his discount will be limited to £2,000. The way in which the discount becomes available is arbitrary. Even if one is eligible for a discount, one may find that it is squeezed or eliminated by the chance factors of the unit cost of the flat. Discount will be arbitrary and confusing.

Will the Under-Secretary clarify whether the outstanding debt includes acquisition costs? They are mentioned specifically in section 1*(a)* of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, but have disappeared from clause 3 *(b)*: which refers to housing associations.

No one will understand exactly how all those strange results happen. A person may have the same tenancy as his neighbour, the same valuation on his flat, and be entitled to the same discount, yet he may end up with a different end price. The Minister finds that funny, but he will have the greatest difficulty in explaining it. The end price will be different because the unit cost of improvement, which must be allocated on each dwelling unit, will vary from flat to flat. Therefore, even if one surmounts all the intermediate hurdles, the purchase price may vary because of the variation in the outstanding debt that remains over the property. Who will be able to explain or comprehend that? What justice and logic is there in the proposals?

One of the unpleasant results—I am moving towards a matter of opinion — will be that the most profitable deal for sitting tenants will be in the most desirable areas: for example, in Partick in Glasgow. The housing association there has done a tremendous job preserving old tenement property in areas of the city by Dumbarton road. Valuations in such areas will be high. Thus, there will be a bigger gap for the discount between the valuation and the existing debt on the property. In other words, it will be an advantage to have been a tenant in a better area rather than, for example, in Shettleston, where the debt will often be more than the valuation.

[Mr. Dewar]

Barnton is an extreme case. I understand that the Link development went up in the 1960s, and that it is a pleasant middle-class residential development, where housing units are valued at £40,000 or £50,000. There will be no problem about any existing debt on these properties because they were built before the 1978 deadline, and a small number of extremely lucky people will make a substantial killing. I am not sure that that is the sort of social balance that should be prayed in aid to justify the policy. What is the justice and logic in that?

Can the Minister say a word or two about charitable status? He will have expected that question and prepared an answer for it, which I welcome. In England, housing associations with charitable status are opted out of the right to buy. If one is a sitting tenant in those circumstances, one calculates what would have been available to one in discount and is given it in the hand as a lump sum subject to certain limits and rules. One vacates the property and buys in the private sector. That is an extraordinary arrangement. Obviously, the advice to Ministers regarding England was that if the assets were alienated for a consideration, and if there was a discount arrangement of the normal sort, housing associations would forfeit their charitable status, and with it a great deal of room for operation.

I do not know whether the Minister has a guarantee that that will not happen in Scotland. Section 360 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 and the attendant legislation apply north and south of the border. Will the Minister assure us that there is a guarantee from the Inland Revenue that in Scotland the arrangements for charitable housing associations, which have been avoided in such a complicated way in England, will not affect their charitable status? That is not a frivolous question. The Minister will have seen the letter from Castle Rock housing association, and the representations of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations on that point, and we are entitled to an answer.

Many of my hon. Friends will take the point, as I hope Conservative Members will, that the whole scheme does not seem to have been designed for Scotland, although it is a Scottish Office Bill. I am thinking particularly of the arrangements for flats. The starting point of the discount is 32 per cent., and will now increase to 42 per cent., and the maximum climbs to 70 per cent. Ministers have spent many a weary hour in the House denying that the more desirable cottage-style, detached and terraced properties were being sold, but the arrangements are a tacit plea of guilty to that charge. That is undoubtedly why the arrangements have been introduced.

Presumably the arrangements have been introduced to encourage tenants in multi-storey flats, and depressing five-storey tenements, which were built in the 1950s and 1960s in Glasgow, to buy their flats. It is a special incentive scheme—a sort of legislative equivalent of an autumn sale to shift unattractive stock. However, the definition of a flat means that the arrangement will inevitably apply to the sandstone inner-city tenements, where many of the housing associations operate. Those flats are not hard to sell. They are attractive, popular, and desirable, and will be available because under the Bill, the Housing Corporation becomes a lender of last resort. There is a danger that those flats, in conjunction with the fair rents policy, which puts them a good deal above the normal public sector rent pattern, will go like hot cakes in areas like Partick and Queens Cross.

If we must offer a special heavy premium to encourage the sale of what the Government now admit to be unpopular properties, it is daft to have the premium in an area where that argument does not apply. The position is even worse—my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and I feel strongly about this—because if one considers the horizontal definition—I suppose that the hon. and learned Member for Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) knows all about horizontal definitions—it is clear that for the purpose of the Bill a flat will include four-in-a-block-type housing in areas such as Knightswood or Mosspark. That is the most popular of all types of council housing in terms of the right to buy.

Such flats are selling well. In Knightswood we have sold more than 800 of them. Yet they will be classed as flats under the legislation, and houses which are not particularly popular will not be eligible for the premium, the 70 per cent. maximum or the additional early discount. It is ludicrous that the most popular parts of public sector housing stock in the west of Scotland, and probably the whole of Scotland, will be favoured in that way. There is no logic in it. The proposal has not been thought out.

In Committee we shall seek safeguards to correct that. We may seek to restrict the premium to post-1919 tenements, to insist that the building must be of three storeys to overcome the four-in-a-block problem, or to suggest that community-based areas should be excluded. We shall try those formulas on the Minister, and I hope that he will respond, not necessarily by adopting one of them, but by finding some solution to that real and pressing problem.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to make a vertical proposition? He started his speech quite well—*[Interruption.]* I wish Opposition Members would wait for the end of my sentence—for him. He demonstrated the unfairness and absurdities, which we can all do by comparing different classifications. He is ending his speech with even more absurdities and unfairnesses by saying that the provision will depend upon the age of the house, the number of storeys and the size of the bathroom. He is falling into the trap which he invented to give himself something to say, which is little.

Mr. Dewar: I am doing something which should be done more often. I am discussing the Bill and pointing out the consequences of a measure which no doubt the hon. and learned Gentleman, in his blind loyalty—that is not always his dominating fault—may support in the Lobby.

The Secretary of State should accept that no one with practical experience in the housing association movement wants this measure. We can go to the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, the Glasgow forum of housing associations, individual housing associations, Shelter or anyone who has worked in the movement and we shall find no one who wants this legislation. There is a universal thumbs down for it.

The Minister managed, slightly disingenuously, to suggest that there is support for the measure. Can he produce evidence of representations in favour of the Bill from any housing association in Scotland? He will be hard-pressed to do so.

The reasons why housing associations do not want the Bill are easily outlined. First, it will make the management of their stock extremely difficult when it comes to holding empty property for decant purposes and when the rolling rehabilitation programme unrolls the sudden arrival of an application to buy can be awkward. If they sell a significant part of their stock it will be difficult for the small associations to maintain a financial base which will allow them to maintain their professional staff. There is the problem of conveyancing costs. I could go on and on. They do not like the Bill because they think that it will make life and the efficient management of their properties much more difficult.

The Bill has serious implications for the future of tenements. Owner-occupiers will appear scattered throughout the blocks. The classic Glasgow tenement—I say this seriously as someone who has lived in them for a large part of his life—costs an enormous sum to repair and those costs could not be shouldered by the individual owner-occupier. Because they opted out in the past, the whole scheme of repairs foundered and we had a downward spiral. The position became worse and worse and ultimately the tenements fell into such a state of disrepair that a section 24 order had to be slapped on them. Tenements are not wally closes in Hyndland. They are not something owned by the family of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West in the royal mile. They are difficult and expensive buildings to maintain. I fear that as a consequence of this Bill we shall again put at risk housing stock which is undoubtedly useful and popular and which had been saved by the housing associations.

I shall not say a great deal about the rural housing associations. The point will no doubt be raised in Committee. Oban and the Isle of Skye housing association is about the newest association to operate. It is possible that there will be sales and that property will move in sharp order into the holiday home market. That worries people who work in the housing association movement.

Widespread sales will, by definition, impoverish private sector rented accommodation. In the 1979 Conservative party manifesto, there was a good deal of healthy—I say that because it made a fair point—rhetoric about the need to have a significant private rented sector. That sector has been squeezed year after year almost to the point of disappearance. It has been given a lifeline by the housing associations, but it is one that may well be threatened by this measure. That is something about which Ministers and Conservative Back Benchers should think seriously.

There is a great deal more in the Bill that I cannot cover. I like some of it. Clause 10 is an honest attempt to deal with a genuine problem which occurs on the break-up of a marriage when the home has to be reallocated. Clause 13 is a common-sense measure which allows a committee member of a housing association to rent or buy from the housing association. The present split is far too rigid and leads to genuine hardship and frustration. There are other provisions that I do not like. I see no point in reducing the taper for the repayment of discount from five to three years.

My overall impression is that the Bill is of almost stunning irrelevance when seen in the context of the Scottish housing crisis. Cuts in revenue support have made the housing support grant a fond and distant memory for many housing associations. Despite what the right hon. Gentleman said, capital budgets have been inadequate and are often shakily based on flogging assets and obtaining the revenue from the sale. The fabric of the housing stock is crumbling. We have a dampness and latter-day dereliction problem which destroys choice for thousands of ordinary tenants. The Bill is the Government's only response to that crisis. It is the sum total of their commitment, and it is something of a bad joke.

The Government say, in a sense genuinely, that they have done better for the housing associations than with other public expenditure on housing. That is a bit of a cack-handed compliment. In 1982-83, £117 million was spent on the housing associations. In 1985-86, £110 million will be spent. It is not all that good a record. In three years, it is a decrease in—

Mr. Younger: Would the hon. Gentleman like to give a figure for the Labour Government's greatest help to the housing associations?

Mr. Dewar: All that I am saying is — — *[Interruption.]* I think that the Ministers' consciences are pricked on this subject. I am entitled to say, and do say, that they praise their record complacently. Spending in 1982-83 was £117 million and in 1985-86 it is expected to be £110 million. That is a cash reduction of £7 million in three years. If we apply the GDP deflator, it is a cut of £21 million, or 18 per cent. The Secretary of State is entitled to say that we did not do well, and no doubt the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) will say that, but I am trying to put into perspective the claims about the Government's alleged housing record and their complacency. They say that they have done well.

Mr. Younger *rose*——

Mr. Dewar: I shall not give way. The right hon. Gentleman has made his point.

It is not just a matter of financial damage. I have a healthy respect—I speak for all my hon. Friends—for what has been done by the community-based associations, often in areas of great difficulty. They have done a tremendous amount in rebuilding not simply the housing stock but the community. The Government must take seriously what has been said by the housing association movement. I shall quote what Mr. Donald Maclennan of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations said:

"Indications are that disenchantment may lead to desertion and the demise of the movement."

The Secretary of State may pull faces at me, but that is what Mr. Maclennan said when he contemplated the damage likely to be caused by the Bill. It may not be so. Perhaps he is being alarmist. But there is much truth in what he said. It is a risk that we should not invite the House to run. It is for that reason that I hope that I shall be joined by many hon. Members, not just from the Opposition, in voting against this measure.

6.8 pm

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): It is some years since I participated in a debate of this kind. I listened carefully, in order to discover whether any of the arguments had seriously changed. I listened to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) with great care. He did not say anything about new policies or new ideas. He tended to put his head into the Bill, and it is what he did not say about Labour party policy that is interesting.

I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the success of the house sales policies introduced in 1979. Nothing is more important for the Scottish economy, the

[Mr. Alex Fletcher]

Scottish labour force and mobility of labour in Scotland than that we should radically increase the number of home owners. The Government set out to do that in 1979, with great success. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I am amazed at the ignorance of hon. Members, who ask why home ownership and mobility should be related. They seem to know nothing of the fact that static labour forces have contributed, among other things, to unemployment in Scotland, never mind to the failure to develop the economy as we should have liked to develop it.

Someone said recently, in relation to lack of mobility in housing in Scotland, that it was easier to get a Scot to move from Glasgow to Rio than from the south side of Glasgow to the other side of the river. The housing policy pursued by Labour Governments contributed greatly to the lack of mobility of labour forces.

What we do not hear about policy from the Labour party we can often read about, and we find that nothing much has changed in that direction. The more the party quotes higher and higher figures needed for newbuild and the maintenance of housing stock in Scotland, the more the party mocks its own policies. If the party ever had the opportunity, it could never find the funds for anything like the expenditure that it insists is necessary for public sector housing in Scotland. The party would rely, not on economic growth, but on public borrowing.

In case Labour Members have forgotten what happened when their party was last in office, I recommend that on Sunday evenings they watch Channel 4, on which there is an interesting programme about the history of politics in Britain in the 1970s. The programme shows how the Labour party tried to spend its way out of trouble and failed miserably in the process.

It is usually the Labour-controlled councils in Scotland with the most irresponsible rent policies which shout loudest for more capital. They seem to fail to see the connection between the income on the housing account and the ability of the housing managers to maintain the stock in an adequate manner.

I am aware, as we all are on the Conservative Benches, and as many people are in Scotland, that in 1979 housing policy needed a new thrust, and the Government were correct then and since then to put the emphasis on home ownership. Most people recognised—including Labour Members—that the large public sector housing schemes were a mistake, not only on environmental grounds, but on social and good housing grounds. The Conservative and Labour parties both contributed to the building of large public sector housing schemes. The difference between them is that we learnt the lesson years ago, and are doubtful whether it has yet been learnt by Labour Members.

Home ownership can go a long way towards remedying the problems and deficiencies of housing schemes and the mistakes that were made over the years, not least because home ownership helps to attract better facilities, including those from the private sector, into the large housing schemes. It also helps to raise standards in the local communities.

I support the Bill and its continuing emphasis on home ownership, but, like the hon. Member for Garscadden, I am concerned about the need for rented accommodation, not least in the urban areas and in my own constituency of Edinburgh, Central.

Probably all hon. Members have received letters about housing associations. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) recently met the Federation of Housing Associations in Scotland, which expressed to him its concern about rented accommodation and about who would meet particular problems and specialist demands if the houses under its management were to be sold.

I have heard from the Fountainbridge housing association in my constituency, and I suggest that if housing association tenants are to have increased rights to buy, other means must be found to provide rented accommodation. Central Government have a part to play in that respect, alongside local government. I shall suggest shortly some ways in which that problem might be tackled, but first I want to make some observations about the problems that we face in the inner city areas, speaking particularly from my experience in my own constituency.

There is the problem of slum landlords, which is creating very serious overcrowding in properties in Edinburgh. There is over-charging and, indeed, racketeering through DHSS frauds. These have been promptly investigated by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services in response to a request that I made to him and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, but we have to be careful that we do not permit a spiv market to be created in city centres. Slum landlords, in buying property, can increase the prices for ordinary people. If they are able to influence the market to too great an extent, they can influence the amount of money that the DHSS will be obliged to pay to people who are seeking accommodation in town and city centres.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that type of activity can cause great difficulties in tenemental property? Although it is unlikely that a Victorian terrace will be bought and completely converted into bedsits, sometimes two or three flats in such a tenement property can be converted, causing great environmental problems for the other tenants.

Mr. Fletcher: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I imagine that, like me, he has had complaints from people—perhaps an old couple—who have lived for many years in such a property and know their neighbours very well. The flat next door is sold to a spiv landlord and suddenly, instead of having two people, they have 22 people living next door, with a very high turnover. It might be said that that is tough luck from a social point of view, but it goes beyond that, because of the behaviour of some of the tenants, with bicycles, motor cycles and oil on the stairs. I receive frequent complaints about such people, and I am extremely sympathetic towards the problems that can arise in those circumstances.

It was for that reason that I asked my right hon. Friend to consider licensing the activities of landlords. [*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), from a sedentary position, says that it is a free market, but free markets of any kind work better when there is some regulation, whether we are talking about properties in Edinburgh, Glasgow or elsewhere.

Edinburgh has tried to find some method of licensing and has run into difficulties. In response to my last letter on the subject, the Secretary of State, in his letter of 27 November, assured me that Edinburgh district council

"have a variety of powers already available to them"

concerning the licensing of such properties.
My right hon. Friend said:

"The Housing (Management of Houses and Buildings in Multiple Occupation) (Scotland) Regulations 1964 provide for control by the local authority of aspects such as state of repair, cleanliness, water supply, heating, ventilation, disposal of refuse and escape from fire."

Those regulations are an important piece of legislation. My right hon. Friend referred in his letter to byelaws with which Edinburgh district council had some difficulty but it should be able to overcome that problem. Most importantly, my right hon. Friend said:

"Stirling District Council operates a registration scheme under the 1966 Act and . . . Glasgow and Clackmannan District Councils are in the process of promoting such schemes."

There is an ability to license, and I would press all local authorities, not least mine, to take advantage of it.

The secretary of the National Union of Students in Scotland, Mr. Paul Carroll, has complained about housing in city centres, and specifically about what appears to be an accommodation bureau. A company, Home Locators, seems to be good at taking £25, usually from students, and sending out a rough list of names to landlords. An enterprising survey by Mr. Carroll and other NUS members showed that few people were satisfied that a serious attempt was made to find them accommodation. As Mr. Carroll comes from my constituency, I have suggested that if he cares to send the papers to me I shall pass them on to Sir Gordon Borrie, the Director General of Fair Trading, to investigate the extent to which the company is breaking the law.

Mr. Bob McTaggart (Glasgow, Central): It might be helpful if the hon. Gentleman were to contact the Solicitor-General for Scotland. I raised that matter in a parliamentary question, and the Solicitor-General said that he was investigating it.

Mr. Fletcher: That is extremely helpful. There are sometimes several ways in which problems can be tackled. Because of my recent experience, I immediately thought of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Clause 18 refers to building control amendments and regulations. There is no question but that the Government's improvement grants policy has been of great benefit to inner city areas. I think that both sides of the House agree. One difficulty is over complaints about workmanship. Much of the workmanship appears to be very slack. The blame can be levelled not just at the workers, or even the contractors—although one feels pretty sore at them—but at the architects and surveyors.

After all, the professionals are spending a great deal of public sector money, and I am often infuriated by the absence of any checks by them on the standards of workmanship. I have taken this matter up with Edinburgh district council, which has tried to be helpful by putting more inspectors on to the task of ascertaining what might be done. I remind the professionals of their responsibilities in certifying work, especially in view of the public expenditure involved and the heartbreak caused to families.

A lady who came to see me said, "I have told the workmen to stay out, although the improvements have not been completed, because they are not renovating but destroying my home." I have received many letters on this subject. such complaints are regrettable, especially as the improvements often involve the largest single repair contract ever undertaken on a person's property. Rehabilitating the cities and towns is an important part of housing policy. We must ensure that administration is as efficient as possible.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that £100 million would be added to housing capital this year from council house sales. I have never understood the Labour party's reluctance to accept council house sales. Owner-occupation can contribute to housing capital. I hope that my colleagues will continue to ensure that the Treasury does not steal too much of that money, because the money can be applied to the local good. We must ensure that those local authorities which are capable of spending it wisely on housing have the opportunity to do so.

It is ironic that in Edinburgh alone there are about 2,400 empty local authority houses, many of them in a bad state of repair, and many in undesirable areas. What a waste of resources. It is not enough for a local authority to say to central Government, "Give the council money so that we can repair these houses." It is necessary to constrain public expenditure. It is not enough, when rented accommodation is so scarce, for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to watch the problem without trying to ascertain what can be done.

I suggest the setting up of a partnership between the local authority, which owns the properties, the private sector, which might be willing to develop the properties, and a third party, which might manage them. I envisage management under which the properties are repaired to a certain standard and are then let to those in need of rented accommodation.

If Labour Members and their colleagues in local government would not resent private sector funds being applied in this way, public-private sector rented accommodation might begin to become available in our city centres. Such a scheme might lead to improvements and increases in this kind of accommodation. More rented accommodation obviously means better use of resources.

I fully support the push towards home ownership, but I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will take steps to assist in the provision of rented accommodation, especially in urban areas. If we are to help people in need, the Labour party has an important part to play. Private rented accommodation is scarce because no one thinks that it would be a good investment. People think that as soon as any move was made in that direction the Labour party would say, "We shall nationalise and take it over if we ever return to office." [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] That may seem to be such an obvious remark that it gives pleasure to Labour Members, but that attitude does not help the very people about whom Labour Members usually claim to care. Private sector resources are available, but a partnership between the public and private sectors could result in their being applied to renovation of public sector housing along the lines that I have suggested. This could help to alleviate the serious problem that exists in Edinburgh and, I have every reason to believe, in many Labour constituencies.

It is hard to believe that public sector resources and houses are being properly utilised when about 250,000 local authority houses in Scotland lie empty. That is not a good use of resources. It does not help the very people who are the subject of this debate. The sooner the Labour party applies some imagination, the sooner we can assist those in need of rented accommodation.

6.29 pm

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I am not clear whether the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) said that his hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram), the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, lacks imagination. I suspect that he was, although he was too polite to say it overtly.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that there is no evidence of a demand for this legislation. He is right. It is difficult to understand why, other than for the doctrinal beliefs to which the Government cling, it has been introduced. Far more important matters should be given priority.

I do not deny that the Bill contains useful and helpful proposals. Reference has been made to clauses 10, 12, 13 and 18. However, the main thrust of the legislation is not well thought out and could do damage. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the joint local authority campaign in Strathclyde are not the only groups who believe that the major problem is lack of investment in new housing stock and in improving and maintaining the existing housing stock, including substandard stock. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central also knows as well as I that this is the main problem. Every time that I hold a clinic or open my postbag I am faced with appeals for help in obtaining housing. I support the right to buy in principle, but I do not believe that it should be an unconditional right. That was our view about the 1980 legislation.

There is also a right to rent. The Government have profoundly neglected that right, and it was the main thrust of the speech of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central. Spending on Scottish housing has been halved since the Government came to office in 1979. Public sector house building is lower than at any time since 1945. The result is lengthening waiting lists, of which all hon. Members have experience. Furthermore, 45,000 to 46,000 jobs in the Scottish construction industry have been lost since the Conservative Government took office. These are major issues for Scottish housing, but the Bill does not address them.

Equally, the Bill contains illogicalities and weaknesses. Some have already been referred to by the hon. Member for Garscadden, but I should like to refer briefly to a few of them. First, we have not yet received an adequate answer to why, in the Government's judgment, the voluntary code is unsatisfactory. The hon. Member for Garscadden reminded us that it was only just over a year ago that the Secretary of State was praising it. The Under-Secretary shakes his head.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): It is not true.

Sir Russell Johnston: I understand that in August 1984 the Secretary of State for Scotland said that he was satisfied with the operation of the voluntary code. Furthermore, I do not think that the Under-Secretary will deny that the housing associations have actively encouraged and helped owner-occupiers, so I do not understand why it is necessary to introduce legislation.

Secondly, there is confusion over charitable status. I am sure that the Under-Secretary knows that the housing associations are concerned, if not alarmed, about their charitable status. I understand that on the radio this morning in Scotland the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) referred to this matter. The only charitable associations that will be exempt are those which cover the whole of the United Kingdom — for example, the Salvation Army or the British Legion. Charitable associations that are based only in Scotland may not be exempt. Their status is determined by the Inland Revenue in Edinburgh.

I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will clarify that important point when he replies to the debate and say what effect the legislation will have on associations that have charitable status granted to them by the Inland Revenue and operate only in Scotland.

Thirdly, there is a serious risk that rural areas will be drained of accommodation that is available at a fair rent. The Bill will not improve the position; it will make it worse. I repeat that I am in favour of sales, but there must be a balance. Local authorities must be able to make provision for continuing need. However, they are unable to do so. My constituency does not experience the same kind of difficulties as are experienced in inner city constituencies, but 1,200 houses in my constituency are classified as being below the official tolerable standard, while over 11 per cent. of the houses are classified as having more than one person per room. There is also a long waiting list. The waiting list in Inverness is as large as it was when I was elected a Member of Parliament. That should not and need not be the case.

Fourthly, I understand that housing associations in England are given financial help under the Housing and Building Control Act 1984. It enables tenants to leave and buy elsewhere. That is a much better method than the Bill's proposals. I do not understand why the provisions of the 1984 Act cannot be applied to Scotland.

Fifthly, the hon. Member for Garscadden stressed the problems that are faced by those who live in tenements, especially in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. Community-based housing associations are special to Scotland. In some places they have helped to bring about a remarkable regeneration of neighbourhoods. They have led to areas being upgraded, and that has had a marked effect on the private sector. The result is that property is very attractive and marketable.

For the purposes of the Bill would it be possible for the definition of "flat" to exclude pre-1919 stock, thus safeguarding Scottish tenements? I do not need to repeat the problems that surround the obtaining of agreement on roof repairs. Multiple ownership can produce such problems and the housing associations have tackled them very well.

The Bill is a sad reflection of the Government's priorities. It shows that they have no understanding of the clamant housing need in many areas of Scotland, including the rural areas. There is not evidence that the voluntary code is not being operated successfully by the housing associations, but there is evidence aplenty that much more important work is crying out to be done.

6.38 pm

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): I welcome the Bill. It marks another step in the Government's housing policy, and it will be given a broad welcome throughout Scotland.

I am upset that the remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) about the Bill were so slight. He failed to refer to two important points. First, this

Government's policy of selling public housing stock has largely been conceded by the Opposition. They know that they could not reverse that policy. When the Opposition were given the opportunity to say what they would do, it was notable that the hon. Member for Garscadden sat firmly in his place. He did not tell the House what he would do if he were in office. Although the Opposition may contest many of the Bill's provisions, I think that they will find, as they have found with other housing legislation introduced by the Government since 1979, that at the end of the day they are forced to concede that the Government's policy is right.

The Bill represents another thrust in the Government's policy of handing housing stock back to the people who should have the greatest interest in it — those who occupy it. I do not concede that it represents any threat to the housing associations in Scotland.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): If the hon. Gentleman has such passion for handing houses over into owner-occupation, why does he not persuade his hon. Friends to extend the right to buy to those in private accommodation?

Mr. Malone: There is a simple answer. The proportion of public housing stock sold into private ownership was extremely small, but, without any encouragement, a significant proportion of the private rented sector has voluntarily been sold into owner-occupation. I do not understand how the Labour party can say that there should be a vibrant rented accommodation sector when it is as a result of its policies that the private rented housing stock has been sold into owner-occupation as it has fallen vacant.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us, if he can, of any owner of private rented accommodation who sold any of his stock at a discount?

Mr. Malone: A significant proportion of the private rented housing stock has been sold into owner-occupation. If the hon. Gentleman understood the Government's policy properly, he would know that it is to encourage the sale of public sector housing and to satisfy the principle of owner-occupation that discounts have been provided. That is fairly clearly stated. There is nothing reprehensible about that. It should be positively encouraged.

I should be interested to hear from the Labour party whether it believes in the principle of owner-occupation. If it does, I would be interested to know why it might oppose the Bill tonight, because the Bill will extend the principle of owner-occupation, which the Government have sought sought to extend since 1979. The Conservative party is faced with a problem that our policy was an initial success, but sales peaked in the first quarter of 1983.

It is extremely disappointing that flatted property did not form a significant proportion of council house sales. In Scotland, the proportion of flatted accommodation in the public sector stood at about 49·5 per cent. Of the public sector housing sold in 1985, only 11·5 to 12 per cent. was flatted accommodation.

It is logical, when faced with such statistics, that a Government who, unlike the Opposition, are pledged to return as much of public sector housing stock into the hands of those who occupy it and into their ownership should seek to extend whatever encouragement they can. The Bill provides such encouragement and will be a useful step to increasing the proportion of flatted accommodation in the public sector that is sold into owner-occupation.

I have listened with some sympathy to a number of points made by the Labour party about the difficulties of maintaining flatted accommodation and of common ownership and the expenses that can arise, but I take exception to a number of points that have been made. The historical difficulty among tenement proprietors in Scotland has not been that they have found it difficult to maintain the property but that factorage, certainly since the war, has not proved a satisfactory way of maintaining property.

In many areas of Glasgow and Aberdeen of which I have experience, many properties have had their factors removed and owner-occupiers have taken on the management of property. Where that has happened, the property has been properly maintained and many of the difficulties and fears that have been raised this evening by hon. Members have been overcome. Common maintenance no longer represents the difficulty that it used to represent. That problem can be tackled and need not cause insuperable difficulties.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I have several examples in my constituency of council houses that have been sold — not necessarily tenement houses but semi-detached — where repairs common to those houses have been delayed because the owner-occupier refuses to pay his share. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the council should go ahead with repairs and sue for the money, or should the council tenant have to put up with such an outrage, where he might have a leaky part on a common roof and have to put up with it because the person next door refuses to share the costs?

Mr. Malone: I cannot speak about the hon. Gentleman's experiences, but I can speak from my experience and my constituency case load on such properties. Often, owner-occupiers find that the boot is on the other foot. They find it difficult to get the local authority to pay for repairs on the other side. Although there are problems, it is not beyond our wit to solve them and it is certainly not for owner-occupiers who take on properties such as that to make sure that that problem is solved.

I should not like housing associations to feel that the provisions of this legislation represent an assault on the work that they are trying to do. It would be wrong if Labour Members represented the legislation in that way. Many housing associations in my constituency do a tremendous amount of good work. Not only do they provide a high standard of basic housing at reasonable rents, but many of them provide for minority interests, which I am sure hon. Members on both sides of the House will concede is a vital development.

I welcome the fact that the Government have enthusiastically taken on the challenge that housing associations have provided and since 1979 have given a substantial amount of finance, whereas before only token amounts have been provided. The hon. Member for Garscadden shakes his head, but he could not be drawn to give the Labour party's best figure for financing housing associations for the simple reason that it was £40 million during the Labour Government's period of office. That

[Mr. Malone]

figure is very much below what the Conservative Government have provided on a year-to-year basis, and I take pride in that.

Mr. Dewar: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that, when the Labour Government were in power, the housing association movement was, to some extent, in its infancy and had not reached the development stage at which it was demanding large sums of money? Over the past three years, taking the estimated figure for 1985-86, there has been an 18 per cent. drop in real terms and a £7 million cash drop. Does the hon. Gentleman support that?

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman cannot get away from the fact that, in absolute terms, the Government are supporting housing associations to a much more significant extent than did his Government. If housing associations have developed in the past few years, it is purely because of this Government's policies in seeking to fund the good work that the housing associations have done.

I pay tribute to the work that housing associations have done in my constituency. They operate principally within inner cities, and have rehabilitated many areas of Aberdeen, where the local authority had been inactive. They have not only improved existing housing, but have provided, by and large, a better environment for their tenants than have many local authorities.

Mr. Fairbairn: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) said that the housing association movement—to use the repulsive term that he used—was in its infancy when the Labour Government were in power. Who was the accoucheur of the baby in the first place? It was people with modest respect like myself who put money into the first housing associations and set them up. The Socialists then stole the baby and "malnutreated" it.

Mr. Malone: I think that that is what my hon. and learned Friend has done to the English language on this occasion. He is usually extremely precise. I am prepared to concede that he may well have been the father of the housing associations. I shall not go into any other area. There seems to be some competition among Conservative Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) may also be the father. We should not go back into the question of the progenitors of those associations but simply say that they fulfil an exceptionally useful function and provide diverse housing accommodation.

The Bill does not represent an attack on housing associations. It was never expected that they would have a permanent and long-term hold on the housing stock. It matters little to them that the houses that they built for the original leaseholders are eventually sold. It is not as if the housing stock has been lost, as Opposition Members seem to believe. By and large, the houses are still available for the occupation of the sitting tenants, and I do not think that the Bill damages the work that housing associations do. Indeed, it may allow them to move on to fresh frontiers because within Scotland there are frontiers enough for them to tackle. I do not believe that anything in the Bill represents a long-term threat to them. It might help them to continue in their work and to carry on with different work.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): My hon. Friend is referring to the movement away from normal housing by the housing associations. Many housing associations in Scotland are putting their main effort into housing for the elderly, the handicapped and the sick. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that we would like to see the money released by the Bill channelled into the avenues that he was talking of just now.

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend is right. He will have experience of housing associations in his constituency that provide such housing. The associations have fulfilled a need that has not been fulfilled in Scotland before. They should be encouraged to do that and to devote any funds that they may get from the sale of their properties to continuing those exercises.

I know that the sale of surplus regional council properties will please several of my own constituents who have had difficulty in attempting to buy property of that sort. In one or two cases there has been a rather strange difficulty. The district council in Aberdeen has entered into missives for the sale to a sitting tenant and it has subsequently been discovered that the ownership of the property rests not with the district council but with the regional authority. I hope that the Bill will deal with that, among other difficulties, and will allow those council houses to be sold.

I welcome the Bill, but it is a limited measure. Although we have sold a relatively significant proportion of our public sector housing stock since 1979, we have taken only one or two bites at the cherry. The Bill represents another small bite, but it does not make inroads into what I think is the principal problem associated with housing in Scotland, which is that far too high a proportion of our housing stock is owned by local authorities. Local authorities, in the face of grave housing difficulties, which are conceded on both sides of the House, have not acted promptly in many cases even when solutions have been presented to them. Glasgow district council's disgraceful treatment of an offer of development of Hutcheson town E block is but one example of political intransigence damaging the prospect of rehabilitating the housing stock in Glasgow. I suppose that that applies to the rest of Scotland.

Surely there must be some common ground, no matter who owns the property, whether it be local authorities, housing associations or shared ownership schemes, whether it be by selling to building societies that are prepared to undertake the rehabilitation of long-since derelict property. Whether it be all of those things or any one of them, we should not have closed minds to developments that could improve the housing stock and give a better life to tenants and owners alike.

Much has been said from the Labour Benches about the lack of resource. The sad truth, as was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher), is that a substantial amount of the resource, because of the way in which it was planned and built, is now standing unoccupied. The fact that we have such a high vacancy rate in our public housing stock in Scotland and long housing waiting lists is nothing short of a public scandal. Many local authorities simply refuse to look at other forms of ownership and stand in the way of schemes that would rehabilitate that stock, such as different rented terms or selling the property into private owner-occupation.

If we could get rid of much of the dogma that surrounds public housing stock in Scotland and realise that mixed ownership is the best way to promote the interests of those who rent houses and owner-occupiers, perhaps we would increase the value and habitability of most of our housing stock in Scotland. The Bill represents a step towards that objective. I hope that Ministers' thoughts on Scottish housing will not stop there. I hope that they will go further and that local authorities will be encouraged to move away from the stalemate in which they seem to find themselves so that all of us in Scotland may benefit from a more flexible and better housing stock.

6.57 pm

Mr. Bob McTaggart (Glasgow, Central): When the Government announced their intention to introduce the Bill they promised:

"Bills will be introduced to extend the rights of public sector tenants."

Hearing such a promise expressed in such language, one could be forgiven for assuming that the Government really did have the interests of public sector tenants at heart. Anyone who was tempted to think along those lines would have been grossly mistaken, because the Government definitely do not have the interests of public sector tenants at heart.

In the six years that the Government have been responsible for public sector policy, they have inflicted more spending cuts and caused more widespread damage to the interests of public sector tenants than any other Government since the end of the second world war.

The Glasgow and West of Scotland forum of housing associations has provided a useful summary of that record. It is using it to promote the case for increased public spending on Scottish housing. The summary is equally useful for pointing out, and putting in its proper context, the Government's real attitude towards public sector tenants. It shows that spending on Scottish housing has halved since 1979. Public sector house building in Scotland is at its lowest level since the second world war. Home improvements have slumped since the general election in 1983 and rents are increasing far faster than the rate of inflation.

Those statistics help to show that while the Government shout from the rooftops of their concern for the welfare of tenants in the public sector, they are acting to threaten and undermine whatever security and well-being those tenants are able to enjoy. There is no doubt that the Government have concentrated their attack on public spending on public sector housing. There is no doubt that they have consistently pursued a policy of promoting home ownership at the expense of those who cannot afford or do not want to own their own homes and opt instead for renting in the public sector.

Public subsidies to home owners have been maintained at a time of cuts in public spending, but only because cuts could be made elsewhere and with less electoral damage to the Conservative cause. Having heard some of the speeches today, I have no doubt that the Government believe their policy of extending the right to buy their homes to public sector tenants to have been electorally successful. The right to buy one's council house or now even one's own housing association house has been extended to many tenants, but, again, only at the expense of other tenants and would-be tenants in the public sector. Labour Members are all in favour of extending choice. We should like everyone to be able to choose whether to rent or buy the home in which he lives, but we draw the line when one person's choice restricts the choice of others. That is where we differ fundamentally from the Government and the proposals in the Bill.

The Government's attitude to housing has been consistently divisive since 1979. Their reaction has been determined by the potential for maximising the electoral advantage to the Conservative party. Their main concern with tenants' rights is whether those rights can be translated into votes either for the Conservative party or against the Labour party. The Bill must be seen in that light. The question arises why legislation is necessary in certain areas.

In 1980, when the Tenants' Rights, etc. (Scotland) Bill was enacted, the housing associations were successful in convincing the Government that the best course was to exclude housing association tenants from the right-to-buy provisions. Rather than forcing them to comply with the right-to-buy clauses, the Government decided to introduce the voluntary code arrangements whereby the decision to sell or retain for rent was left with the housing associations. After all, they knew better than anyone else, in relation to their own housing stock, which type of tenure balance was desirable and best suited to their local circumstances.

After all, we have the voluntary management committees, unpaid and giving their free time, committed 100 per cent. to the improvement and rehabilitation of the communities in which they live, and they are in the best position to assess the level and nature of local housing demand. They know how long their waiting lists are. They know the individual needs of those on the waiting lists. They know the housing demand in their localities, whether for special needs or otherwise.

That has been recognised by successive Labour and Conservative Governments. Indeed, the work of housing associations has generally been recognised as one of the outstanding successes in housing. In Glasgow they have made a tremendous impact in transforming areas of the inner city which previously had deteriorated under private landlords and owner-occupiers.

It is just over a year since the Secretary of State was in Glasgow to open the 10,000th improved flat, and he declared himself completely satisfied with the way in which the voluntary code arrangements were working. We know that a week is a long time in politics, but, regardless of the view on how time changes politicians' outlooks, the case is yet to be made on what has happened in the intervening period to change the Secretary of State's mind. If he was satisfied with the voluntary code then, why is he not satisfied now? Which specific changes have occurred to change satisfaction to dissatisfaction and therefore into the proposals in the Bill?

Mr. McQuarrie: I had considerable experience of housing associations in 1967, when the housing association of which I was chairman built 67 houses in the constituency of the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). The hon. Gentleman was asking what made my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State change his mind. Would not it be fair to say that the main reason why he has introduced the Bill is the desire of the occupants of housing association houses to become owners? That is the right which we are trying to give the people of Scotland.

Mr. McTaggart: The Secretary of State has not even tried to say that at the Dispatch Box. No evidence has been brought before the House to tell us why the Secretary of State has changed his mind.

I believe that the real motivation behind the Secretary of State's change of mind is entirely party political. In the Government's opinion, it was electorally popular to give the right to buy to council tenants in 1980. They hope fervently that it will be electorally popular to give the same right to buy to housing association tenants in 1985-86.

With the prospect of annihilation in the regional council elections next May, it is time for any and every desperate political remedy. As an attempt to restore the Tory party's electoral credibility, the Bill is doomed to fail, because it will have a disheartening effect on the management committees of housing associations. Having given so much of their time and skill, and having contributed so successfully to the transformation work of the past decade, they will now see that work threatened by the disruption that will be occasioned by the Bill.

The only houses that will be sold will be those that the housing associations have already improved. They will therefore have to carry a far higher overall proportion of loss-making, unimproved houses. That must threaten their scale of operations and financial viability. The morale of voluntary committee members will be undermined as they see the housing assets of their associations sold at knock-down prices. That must be considered before we turn to the enormous problems of attempting to pursue a sales policy for housing association properties that can even begin to be accepted as fair or will not prove to be scandalously wasteful of public money.

As I understand it, the cost of buying an improved flat from a housing association will depend on several factors. Among them will be the date when the flat was improved by the housing association and the amount of rehabilitation work carried out at that time. Flats improved, say, 10 years ago were rehabilitated at much lower costs to the housing associations than flats improved over the past year or so. Moreover, flats requiring a lot of remedial work will necessarily cost more than flats requiring much less work. In the sale of housing association flats, the sale price must never fall below the cost floor debt—the amount of public money spent on acquiring and rehabilitating the flat. That debt will, of course, vary from flat to flat, depending both on the scale of work and on when it was carried out. Flats requiring little work and completed some time ago will have a lower cost floor debt than those needing extensive work and completed only recently.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has just explained the protections for the housing associations. Why will housing associations make a loss when they sell properties? Surely if the tenants become owner-occupiers, they will pay a management charge, as opposed to a rent, giving the housing associations an income.

Mr. McTaggart: I speak as a former member of a housing association in Glasgow. One of the biggest problems that housing associations face in formulating a plan for rehabilitating a number of flats, close by close, is acquiring those properties, decanting the tenants and getting on with a block project. Once flats that have been acquired and rehabilitated — with rents having been received for them—are sold, the housing association will be left with empty flats awaiting rehabilitation, with less income coming from its tenants. That is the reality.

Situations could also arise where two similar flats in terms of size and location have different cost floor debts. That could mean that two tenants, entitled to the same discounts and buying similar flats of similar value in the same neighbourhood, could end up paying significantly different sums for their flats. The calculations required are not only complex and time-consuming, but are guaranteed to give rise to grudges, ill-feeling and a sense of unfair treatment among those who believe themselves to have been disadvantaged.

Mr. Fairbairn: Supposing, in the most perfect of all worlds, everybody could buy an identical flat for the same price, would the hon. Gentleman be in favour of these proposals?

Mr. McTaggart: I said earlier that Labour Members are in favour of choice. We wish that everyone had the choice to rent or buy their flat. We differ fundamentally only because we object when the choice of one person affects the choice of others.

One way out of the present situation could be for the Government to disregard cost floor debts by treating all buyers in the same manner, irrespective of the public investment in their particular property. It would thereby be possible for buyers to be treated equally. But if that were to happen, what then of the public interest? What about the taxpayers' money? What does the taxpayer get in return for large investment in housing association properties? The answer seems to be very little—a huge amount of public money for a relatively low level of home ownership in improved properties.

If the Government were genuinely concerned with helping housing associations, they would listen to what those associations are saying. They should listen when they are told that there is an identified need to rehabilitate and or build about 500,000 houses for people in need. They should listen when the associations identify the capital costs of such a programme as £5 billion at present day prices. They should listen when the associations ask for an increase in their capital allocations to achieve a 7,000-house programme by 1988. That is the way to begin to tackle the housing problems which confront the Scottish people. The Bill is irrelevant to that task and in the areas that I have mentioned it can only make matters worse.

7.14 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I welcome the Bill, and I welcome it for a fundamental reason. The state should never intervene between a citizen and his home. That is a fundamental principle which did not exist before 1945, except in the most limited sense, and that has had one of the most disastrous effects on industrial, economic and social prosperity in Scotland ever since.

It was Labour Governments and Labour administrations in Glasgow which destroyed the centre of the greatest Victorian city in Britain, once known as the second city of the empire; second, as it then was, to Calcutta, not to London. In that great city, which rose from about 150,000 inhabitants to nearly 750,000 in the short space of 40 years, some of the greatest housing was created and was owned and lived in by people whose poverty was comparatively massive when judged by the standard of anybody who now lives in an equivalent housing association house.

Most of those great houses, with all their grandeur, which escaped demolition by Labour administrations in Glasgow, have, under this Government, provided magnificent homes in the centre of Glasgow, but around them there is a necklace of some substandard filing cabinets for the unfortunates who have been driven, by the terrible policy that everybody should be in the maw of local authority officials, to live in the great conglomerates of Easterhouse, Blackhill, Nitshill and Castlemilk. That is the shame of Scotland. I accept that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart) has been converted to the concept of choice, but Labour Members, in their heart of hearts, believe that the road to political thraldom is to have everybody in a local authority house of some kind. That is at the centre of the philosophy of Labour Members.

Lest I depart from the dictum of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), that I do not always appear to be a sycophant, I shall say something about the Bill before I come on to other matters. I do not imagine that there are many people who, if they looked at this document, which is some 31 pages in length, and who own a house, or are tenants, or wish to own a house or to obtain a house, or to understand what they would have paid in the way of a rebate, or how many years had to elapse before they qualified, would understand it. I do not myself. I say that because the hon. Member for Garscadden is a solicitor, and solicitors always suffer from an inferiority complex because they are in some way the junior half of the profession and send to counsel for their opinions. Let me get over the unfortunate paranoia of the hon. Gentleman. He is a clever man. He has understood the Bill. I cannot understand it. He is the senior in this matter and I listened to his opinion with relish, because I knew that it was wrong.

That does not alter the need for a simple Bill giving people the right to buy their house after having had the most evil landlord of all, the state, which is much more inscrutable than all the officials with whom the unfortunate tenant must deal. In the most enlightened areas, such as Perth and Kinross, let alone in Glasgow and Strathclyde, the state is the most insensitive landlord.

Mr. David Marshall: Is the hon. and learned Gentleman seriously asking us to accept that a district council, even a Conservative-controlled one, is a worse landlord than the Rachman-type landlords, such as Norman Properties in Scotland? That is nonsense.

Mr. Fairbairn: Rachman lived in England, not in Scotland. I do not know Rachman's type, because I never met him. I do not believe that he was a type.

No one is more insensitive than the officials of housing departments when they deal with their tenants. There may be nice officials and difficult tenants, but it is an artificial and bad relationship. People should own their homes, and be able to choose and to change their homes. The format of the Bill is incomprehensible to any ordinary person likely to be in that position.

When the late Lord Milligan was Lord Advocate, he made a speech in the other place in which he pointed out that if Parliament decided to legislate that only six people should be allowed to sit at any one time in a railway carriage, it would be unable to pass a Bill to that effect. The Bill would have to state that notwithstanding the provisions of the Railway Act 1953, and as not excepted in schedule 1 of proviso 2 of this Act, under part IV it shall be impossible for any persons to occupy a railway carriage except as so hereafter provided. I agree with that. We should have a simple Bill to do a simple deed. This simple deed is one of the most blessed that any Government can do, and one of the most excellent that this Government have done.

The right to buy has allowed people to wrench their nest and home, which surrounds them perhaps for ever or only temporarily, out of the hands of Departments and local authorities. That is of immense emotional and psychological importance and has a huge effect on people's respect for themselves. Whether a house is in a good or bad area, or in the middle of a council scheme, whether it is a police house or a fireman's house, those that are privately owned are those that are made proud.

Who would spend money on his home if an official could come along and say, "I order you to have a new front door because everyone is getting one," or "I forbid you to have a new sink because nobody is getting one"? That is an appallingly arrogant attitude to the home, which is the womb of the family. It is important that people should have a choice.

When housing associations were first set up, it was thought strange that a few people could get together, buy shares and provide the money to do up a building so that families could buy it and live there. The money was used to do up the next building. That is how housing associations and the Link association were set up—but not in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton).

I set up a housing association and did up little houses in East Lothian, Edinburgh and elsewhere. The idea is to generate funds to restore houses so that people can own them and say, "This is mine. This is my family's home," and not feel, as people do when they are in the Army, that they are the temporary residents of a hut or camp. Home ownership is the thrust of democracy and human decency, and is essential for a healthy society.

Many of the calamities with which I and the hon. Member for Garscadden must deal, have arisen from the terrible circular cities of concrete and negativity that have been built by Socialist councils. The Government have been accused of throwing away the family silver, but we cannot excuse the Earl of Stockton because, as Housing Minister, he probably encouraged those councils to build as they did.

Many local authorities, housing associations, police authorities and fire authorities wish to keep their empires, staff numbers, importance and power over helpless people. They frustrate the purchase of houses by those who live in them. That effective policy has been achieved by delaying conveyancing and by complaints of lack of staff so that the empire can be increased. They try to persuade the Government that it is a suitable bribe to say that more solicitors are needed in the legal department so that staff can be doubled and the pyramid can rise higher. They say that the local authority grants are being cut, but that they need more money because if the Government say that they must sell council houses, more officials and more conveyancers are needed. That excuse is not overcome by the Bill.

I ask my right hon. Friend to consider carefully whether the Bill empowers those officials to frustrate the tenant's attempt to purchase his home. Let us not overlook the cruelty of that, because it frequently makes the price to the

[Mr. Fairbairn]

tenant greater and beyond his reach. It is essential to prevent that from happening. It is fatuous for an official or an authority to stop, by delay, the purchase of a home.

Clause 7 introduces a new section to a different Act, which it is bound to do, because it would upset anyone who drafted a Bill to make it comprehensible. The problem of mobility comes into play when a secure tenant of one landlord becomes, at his request, the secure tenant of another landlord. Frequently, housing authorities will say, "We cannot give you a house in Crieff because you already have one in Greenock." If the housing authority in Crieff says, "We cannot give you a house in Crieff because you do not have one here," how can a person become a secure tenant? Many people cannot take up jobs because they cannot move house. Their housing authorities are too stick-in-the-mud. Their attitude is extraordinary when one considers that a huge proportion of their properties can be empty at any given time, and frequently are empty for long periods.

The hon. Member for Garscadden made an extremely valid point at the beginning of his speech when he asked about the category of houses in which some tenants live. For example, the Gorgie and Dalry housing association in Edinburgh has renovated many houses there. Indeed, one of the housing association's tenants was my late client, Mr. James Steel, who used to forge 2s 6d pieces, and latterly florins, because ICI, without telling him, narrowed the strip from which he had made half crowns. His consent was needed before the entire block could be renovated.

Mr. Donald Stewart: What is the hon. and learned Gentleman talking about?

Mr. Fairbairn: His name was Steel; no doubt he was a member of the family of the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel), who usually sits in front of the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart).

My hon. Friend should consider whether the point made by the hon. Member for Garscadden is correct. It would be unfair if someone who gave up his private tenancy or ownership to enable a scheme to be carried out did not benefit in the way that someone who joined the association would benefit. I do not know — because I do not understand the Bill — whether the hon. Gentleman is correct, but assuming that he is, the matter must be rectified.

I do not accept that it is unfair if someone is offered an equivalent flat, which was the hon. Gentleman's next point. I bought a house on the other side of the Thames that is the same distance from Big Ben, on a diameter, as is a house in Marsham court. The house that I bought is infinitely better than any house that I could have bought in Marsham court, and it cost about one twentieth of the price of the latter. I am not impressed by the concept of comparative value, because there are so many differentials that it is difficult to make a comparison. I should be happier to live in any of the restored flats in the Trongate in Glasgow than in the newest houses in Easterhouse.

The concept of unfairness arises in our postbags every day. Our constituents write to us saying, "Miss Snodgrass got a two-bedroomed house before I did, but she is an unmarried mother and I am a married mother." People will always complain when the local authority is the provider, but one does not hear such complaints when the property is in private hands.

I cannot welcome enough the surge in home ownership. It is essential to human dignity, to the stability of the family and to people's ability to change jobs. If a man has an asset to sell, he can go wherever he wishes and buy another asset with the proceeds of that sale. Tenants locked in the grip of an authority and its officials do not have that certainty. It is extremely difficult for my constituents to move from one part of Perthshire to another, despite the fact that all houses are administered by the same authority. It is even more difficult to move from one authority to another. Part of my constituency used to be in Central region and part in Tayside. The difficulty of persuading Central region to house someone who already had a council home in Tayside but who wished to move was almost insurmountable. That difficulty would be completely removed by more ownership of houses.

I would go further than the Bill and introduce a simple measure entitled the Housing (Scotland) Bill (No. 2) which would say simply that anyone who lives in a house owned by a local authority is now its owner for a grassum of 1p. There shall be an assumption that it has been conveyed, and all housing authorities will be removed.

Mr. William McKelvey: I do not understand the hon. and learned Gentleman's passion for giving local authority houses to their tenants. In many ways I share his view that everyone should be a home owner, but why not apply this to the private sector? Not all private accommodation is of Victorian or Georgian grandeur. I lived in a single-end in houses that were built beside the mill so that the workers would all live nearby. Our family of four were overjoyed to move from a single-end to a council house. Why not extend the right to some of the more desirable areas in the private sector? Tenants who have paid their rent for up to 40 years have the right to home ownership and those houses should be handed over for a penny, on the ground that the landlords have been receiving rent for such a long time.

Mr. Fairbairn: I have no more fondness for the mill owner than I have for the local authority, which also holds people in thrall. It is abominable, and that is what I wish to remove, but a local authority has no interest in its property, except in retaining its empire. A landlord, or a person who owns a house — I do not like the word "landlord" — which he does not want for the moment, just as one might not need a pair of glasses or a book, should be able to lend it and to get it back again.

Mr. McKelvey: It is a business.

Mr. Fairbairn: For some people, it may be a business. The trouble is that the private rented sector, which could have resolved many problems, was destroyed because it was assumed to be wicked. If a man cannot lend his house for as long as he wishes in the knowledge that, eventually, he will get it back, he will not lend it at all. The private rented sector should be infinitely more fluid. Houses do not matter to a local authority. The director of housing is not dealing with a house which he will need back again.

Subject to allowing those who cannot provide for themselves to rent houses, the more home ownership there is, and the more rights people have to transfer, the happier

will be our society in Scotland. I am appalled that such a huge proportion of the population of Scotland are the serfs of local authorities, and I wish that to end totally as soon as possible.

7.40 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is well known for his wild exaggeration on almost every subject under the sun.

Mr. Fairbairn: Snap.

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. and learned Gentleman usually represents nobody but himself and he does not seriously believe what he says on this matter. He would have us believe that everybody is in a position to buy his own house.

Mr. Fairbairn: Give them their houses.

Mr. Hamilton: Who will pay for the houses? Will it be the much maligned state which the hon. and learned Gentleman talked about? Millions of people are incapable of buying a house, and more so in Scotland now than for many a long year. Hundreds of thousands in Scotland have been flung on to the dole by the Government.

The Prime Minister lives rent free in a state-owned house. She obviously objects to that because she is buying a house less than a mile from where I live. Unfortunately, my house has declined in value since that was confirmed.

I took the trouble of obtaining brochures from Barratt, the jerry-builders in Scotland. However, the Barratt houses in Dulwich are not jerry-built, and I shall read out what will be in the kitchen of the Prime Minister's new house when she moves there from her wretched state-owned home. The following appliances are included in the kitchen: a gas hob, an electric oven, an electric microwave, an electric barbecue grill, a hob ventilator system, a fridge, a dish washer, a sink and tops. Purchasers will be able to choose the colour and pattern of floor and wall tiles. The master bedrooms include a whirlpool bath, two basins, a separate shower, bidet and W.C. all with gold plated fittings. The Prime Minister can buy such a house and the Government are telling the people of Scotland that they shall have the freedom of choice, but they are not telling them that they will not be able to avail themselves of it. Is that the object of the Government's housing policy?

It is idle to attempt to debate and discuss housing policy in a vacuum, separate from other Government policies. The Secretary of State's speech was an appalling example of how a problem of serious and catastrophic dimensions can be treated with the smug, smiling complacency for which he is renowned.

The Bill is monstrously irrelevant when considered in relation to Government policy as a whole. The crime statistics for Scotland since 1978 show that robbery has increased by 18 per cent., housebreaking by 46 per cent., vandalism by 40 per cent., fire raising by 63 per cent. and serious assault by 51 per cent. However we interpret the facts, they are catastrophic and terrifying.

In the same period, unemployment in Scotland, not least among building trade workers, has increased. The monthly average in Scotland in 1980 was 207,900. In 1984 it was 341,600, and in the first nine months of this year the average monthly figure is 353,000. That is an increase of over 75 per cent. in the six years that the Government have been in power.

These rises in crime and unemployment have been recorded since 1979 when 23,782 houses were completed. In 1984, that figure had declined to 18,670. That is the way in which the Bill must be considered.

The three crucial areas of escalating crime, rocketing unemployment and virtual extinction of local authority house building for rent are closely interlinked. The increasing feelings of hopelessness, frustration and anger lead to social frictions and to the crime figures that I have mentioned.

The Church of Scotland Committee on Church and Nation reported to the General Assembly in May and quoted the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations which stated:

> "Scotland is still desperately short of housing for all types of needs . . . At the present rate of building, demolition and household formation, each new home built will have to last 300 years if the housing stock is to replace itself."

That is the measure of the problem as deduced by the housing associations and supported by the Church of Scotland, the Council of the Royal Institute of British Architects, the National Federation of Building Trades Employers and by every responsible authority in Scotland and the United Kingdom. That is also the view of two royal princes—and they should know what they are talking about in this matter—Prince Philip and Prince Charles, who have both repeated precisely what has been said by other authorities.

The Secretary of State rubbished the reports of COSLA although its view is shared by all the other authorities that I have mentioned. A year ago, Shelter calculated that in real terms, between 1979 and 1986, public expenditure on housing in Scotland will have been slashed by over 50 per cent. Whatever authority one considers, from the highest in the land to the lowest, the story is the same. There has never been a more devastating story of negligence and incompetence in housing than in the past four or five years.

Nobody can accuse my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of not doing his homework. He does more homework than many Ministers on housing matters. Many of the Ministers did not know what my hon. Friend was talking about and the Opposition will be very interested in the Under-Secretary's answers to my hon. Friend's questions. I suspect that he will not answer half the questions because the answers have not yet been prepared by his civil servants. No doubt we will get them in due course in Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden accused the Government of having produced in the face of all the evidence an ill-thought-out, ill-conceived and irrelevant Bill. When the Bill reaches the statute book, not one extra house will have been provided as a consequence. There will be no diminution of waiting lists. Young people who are getting married now will not move up the queue. In fact, I received a letter only last week from the Glenrothes new town development corporation. People often write to me asking if they can exchange houses or if a daughter can be placed on the housing waiting lists because she is getting married. The Glenrothes corporation said that it is precisely because it is not allowed to build for rent that it has been compelled to sell. Therefore there is less and less of a pool for renting, and the problems are much more difficult to solve as a direct——

Mr. Michael Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Hamilton: No, I shall not give way. I promised to make a short speech and before I resume my place I wish to say something about clause 18, which refers to building regulations. I intervened during the Secretary of State's speech to seek some assurances from him. He smiled and told me that I need not worry as building regulations would not be dealt with directly by the Bill. However, he explained that the Bill would lead to minor improvements, which will be welcomed by my hon. Friends and myself. But there is no doubt in which direction the Government will move in subsequent legislation. It is clear from their intentions that they will allow jerry-builders like Barratts a free hand to build what they like within the minimal requirements that will be provided in the new regulations.

The Government's intentions for building regulations have been clear for over two years. The Government propose to remove minimum space and other standards for housing in Scotland. In early June 1984, they issued a consultative paper in which it was clear that their intention was to allow builders such as Barratts to do just about anything they liked. The Government faced opposition from Kirkcaldy district council, Dunfermline district council and from every other local housing authority in Scotland. They did not want Barratts to be allowed to build to such regulations, but the Scottish Office overruled them and allowed Barratts to build the rabbit hutches that are now to be seen in Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy and other areas.

In the consultative document to which I have referred, there is no mention of minimum ceiling heights. Is that what the Government intend to set out in subsequent legislation? Are they content that Barratts shall be allowed to build for dwarfs or those who are stunted, like a number of Conservative Members who are now in the Chamber? Under the terms of the consultative document, tiny boxes could be built and be called bedrooms. The proposition was to reduce the minimum space to 70 per cent. of what is provided in the current regulations. The kitchen could be an area below a stair with no natural lighting and consisting of a sink, a cooker and about a cubic yard of storage in some adjacent area. That was described by the Scottish Association of Chief Building Control Officers as "ridiculous".

The Prime Minister is responsible for that. She will not have a 5 ft ceiling in her home. She will not have a kitchen below a stair. She will have the sort of properties which I have described. No Tory Minister—not even a Tory Back Bencher—would live in the sort of house or hutch that is proposed for tenants in Scotland. The Minister does not understand. No Minister in this Administration understands the housing or other problems of ordinary people who are living on the bread line and are desperately anxious for some shelter. The Under-Secretary should not smile so smugly. Smugness and complacency must be infectious in the Scottish Office.

The Minister refused to meet the Kirkcaldy district council to talk about its massive problems. It could spend tens of millions of pounds on housing improvements, and the Minister knows well what I am talking about. The district council could spend huge sums on bringing the properties under its control to a decent standard. I have in mind the prefabricated houses and other properties which were built in immediately after the war and still exist throughout Fife.

The Government are introducing the Bill because they wish to create the illusion that they are anxious for freedom of choice. They wish also that more people will own their own homes. I recall many years ago that Nye Bevan said that he did not object—nor do I—to anyone owning his own house. I own my house. Nye Bevan objected—and this is my objection — to someone owning someone else's home.

Mr. Donald Thompson (A Lord Commissioner to the Treasury): Like local authorities.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, and private landlords. At least a local authority is elected, and if the people do not like what it does they can kick it out. I suspect that many Tories in Scotland will be kicked out in the elections of May 1986. The Tories are in ill repute in Scotland. They can do what they like in the Bill, or in any other measure, but there will be fewer than 10 Tories representing Scottish constituencies following the next general election. The Bill will do nothing to solve the enormous housing problems in Scotland and for that reason my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will oppose it when the Division takes place.

7.57 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I am grateful for the opportunity to welcome the Bill. I wish especially to thank my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Scottish Office for extending the right to buy to tenants of regional councils. When I raised the matter in Committee on what was then the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Bill, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State assured me that he would consult COSLA prior to considering legislation. I felt that that was a sort of ministerial put down and that nothing further would be heard about the matter. I congratulate him on incorporating in the Bill the right to buy for tenants of regional councils. I know that the provision will be welcomed widely in my constituency.

Equally, the extension of the right to buy to tenants of housing associations is only fair and proper. As a Conservative Back Bencher, I confess that hitherto I have had a slight prejudice against housing associations and the funding thereof. I realise that if the alternative was to fund district councils and the housing authority for the provision of more housing, that would carry the right to buy, whereas it would be voluntary with the housing associations.

I have a number of specific questions which come from my reading of the Bill. I find the measure extremely difficult to understand as it refers back almost constantly to previous legislation. In some instances I may have missed the point.

I should like to know which housing associations will be excluded under paragraph 1(*f*)(ii) of schedule 1. What proportion of the housing stock of regional councils will be excluded by paragraph 18 of schedule 1? We all welcome the improvement in the discount arrangements and the alterations in the cut-off dates, which bring the arrangements into line with what has happened since the right to buy was first granted. In clause 3(1)(*b*), what is meant by

"improvements (other than by way of repairing or maintenance)"?

It seems that that is a potential loophole which could be exploited by local authorities that are concerned to avoid tenants purchasing their properties.

Do the changes in clause 3(2), to include modernisation costs in the debt to be recovered, affect tenants who are

currently in the throes of buying their properties? If it catches those tenants, will the Minister give us an assurance that, in Committee, amendments will be tabled to protect those people? Can he qualify clause 3(3) on the calculation of outstanding debts with regard to housing associations?

I apologise to the House for asking all these detailed questions, but it is important to ensure that the spirit of these important changes is carried through by the local authorities.

The Bill will be welcomed by tenants who are unfortunate enough to live in Labour-controlled authorities which are still doing their level best to prevent home ownership. The prevention of the imposition of unfair contract conditions is welcome. What will be done for those tenants who already suffer from unfair conditions? Such help would encourage tenants to take action against district councils and encourage the transfer between councils. The requirement for housing associations to publish their allocation system is also welcome.

Although I welcome the Bill, it is something of a disappointment. Why has my hon. Friend the Minister not embraced a rather more radical approach? Why has he not listened to views which have been expressed by the Opposition? They are quite right to point out that, for the vast majority of tenants in the public sector, home ownership and the right to buy is not an option. There is a variety of reasons for that—perhaps the property is less desirable, perhaps the tenants are in flatted accommodation. An increase in discount would help to some extent, but they might simply not be able to buy. For them, the prospect of home ownership is as elusive as ever.

As my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) has said, such people are at the beck and call of the officials who are responsible for managing local authority housing. It may not be a malign intention on officials' part, but tenants who depend on their efficiency and good will for repairs and allocations are sadly disappointed and left with the feeling that they are treated like numbers or items to be disposed of.

Would my hon. Friend the Minister consider taking whole housing estates or groups of properties and vesting ownership in tenants' organisations? The privatisation of whole estates under the ownership of tenants as a corporate group would, I am sure, be welcomed by the Opposition.

Mr. Dewar: Will the hon. Gentleman join me in urging the Minister to adopt a more imaginative and generous approach to the value of co-operatives, which, I think, would be of enormous benefit? I recognise that there are three schemes now before us for piloting, but I hope that something of this sort could be included. I hope that the hon. Member agrees with that.

Mr. Forsyth: I should like to go further than the hon. Gentleman. I would like whole estates to be handed over to tenant organisations for management, perhaps under partnership with building societies and other financial institutions. In that way, estates will be managed according to the needs and wishes of the tenants, and will be better for it. It is significant that the people of Thamesmead, when given the opportunity to vote on how they would like their estate to be managed within the GLC area, contrary to popular expectation, voted convincingly to opt for the private sector rather than conventional local authority management.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend may like to know that one of the last acts, and certainly the most civilised and successful, of the Edinburgh district council before it fell into the hands of the lunatics who now run it concerned Pilton estate, which was said to be an undesirable area in which criminals were supposed to live. The council sold that estate to a private organisation which did it up, and it is now one of the most sought after places in Edinburgh to live in.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. I proposed to mention that example as another strategy for dealing with housing problems.

I am not talking about a scheme to turn all tenants into owner-occupiers. On the contrary, I am talking about a scheme of vesting ownership in co-operatives which will then be able to manage those estates much more effectively and responsibly. We have already recognised that many tenants would benefit from that for whom ownership is not an option.

We are all aware of the report on the state and fabric of housing. We do not need to be reminded by management consultants or chartered surveyors that our housing estates are falling to bits. Direct labour organisations are unable to respond to the demands upon them for a variety of reasons. How are we to find the capital and resources to put this right? Much could be done with an injection of private capital.

It is right to remind the House of what has been done in Pilton. I pay tribute to those Labour authorities throughout the country who, perhaps biting their ideological tongues, have successfully gone ahead with such schemes. I hope that other authorities will follow. Some authorities—Glasgow's Hutcheson town E block was a celebrated example—are less than enthusiastic to bring in private developers to develop the estates and sell them. My hon. and learned Friend has already pointed out the extraordinary transformation in an area where people would not live in any circumstances as a tenant, with the result that those properties were left empty, but as soon as the properties were done up the same people were the first in the queue of people wishing to buy.

Mr. Fairbairn: Or rent them.

Mr. Forsyth: Will the Minister institute a new right to allow private developers to identify blocks on estates, or indeed whole estates, which are being left empty and derelict, as many thousands of houses are throughout Scotland? If private developers could introduce a procedure to bid for ownership of such blocks and rehabilitate these properties for sale in partnership, with or without the support of the local authorities. There are far too many properties in Scotland which are empty and decayed because local authorities think that they may be able to get the money to carry out repairs on them. However, the resources are not available from any Government. The resources will not come from the public sector but are available from the private sector. The tenants would prefer such development.

If we are serious about mobility — the Bill does something to improve it—we should be aware of the catastrophic effects of the Rent Acts. They dry up the supply of accommodation, prevent the development of rented accommodation in the private sector and tie people into their communities. The Rent Acts have locked them in. We must all know tenants who say that they could

[Mr. Forsyth]

perhaps get a job down south but that they cannot afford the housing there, that they cannot give up their council house, that they have a garden and that it has taken 20 years to get that high in the pecking order. Reform of the Rent Acts would open a new vista of opportunity for people to move to find employment and it would free the market.

Reform can be achieved without in any way upsetting security of tenure and control of rents for existing tenants. By deregulating all new lettings, we could create a new supply. If hon. Members are honest, they will admit that they know young couples and others who have no prospect of being housed by the local authority and who are unable to buy. If we had a new supply of rented accommodation which is now lying empty or being used for holiday or company lets, such people would thank us for it. It is no use saying that we will protect people against market rents and eviction when the owner wants the property back if the price of that is nowhere to live.

I have already stated the obvious — that there are people who cannot afford to buy. Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider imaginative schemes, perhaps working with local authorities and building societies, to introduce low-cost mortgage schemes for young couples, for example, whose income might not be high enough at the start of their careers to take on a mortgage but whose earning power will increase at precisely the same rate at which the burden of the mortgage declines? There is an opportunity for action there.

We consider it right to subsidise people who cannot afford to pay their rented housing costs, so what is wrong with subsidising people to enable them to meet mortgage payments? How can it be right for vast sums of money to be spent on bed and breakfast accommodation — the sums are substantial—to keep people in accommodation which they are thrown out of with their families at 8 am so that they must wander the streets until they are let in again at night when that costs many times more than subsidising the same people to have their own private accommodation?

I am not suggesting that we establish a system which renders the state open to exploitation by the unscrupulous who might think that there is a good way of getting the state to buy them a house. Many people find themselves in bed and breakfast accommodation, however, and for a variety of reasons. We should not be afraid of what might be considered novel or extraordinary and allow ourselves to be trapped into perpetuating a system that wastes public money, does not provide the best for the people who we are trying to help, and restricts our ability to extend home ownership.

I welcome the Bill. It is a step in the right direction, but my hon. Friend the Minister is being a little too timid. We have a monumental housing problem on our hands, partly because of Socialism, partly as a result of demographic change, and partly because of the system of subsidies that has operated in the housing market. The radicalism that I have described, extension of choice and releasing the energy of the market and the private sector has far more to offer people. The Government should embrace those opportunities. Such action would be popular and they will win a great electoral victory on the strength of such policies.

8.14 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I find myself in the alarming situation of having to agree with a great deal that the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) said. He seemed to be considering housing with fresh eyes. Although I did not agree with everything that he said, especially his clarion call at the end, the extent of our housing problem is such that fresh ideas are needed.

If the Bill is the flagship of the Government's housing programme for 1985-86, I can only say that it has not impressed me. It is very much like a guttering candle. The Government have built on the tenants' rights legislation — irrespective of whether we agreed with that, it was certainly radical—but now we have just bits and pieces. The Bill is a rag-bag and I am not excited in the slightest by it. I shall vote against it, largely because I disagree with housing associations being compelled—for that is what it amounts to—to sell some properties.

I know that housing association properties are in great demand in the inner-city areas that I represent. Their success is demonstrated clearly by that demand, just as the condemnation of the products of the housing policies pursued in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s is represented by people fleeing the concrete mausoleums that were put up in the name of progress and which have trapped many.

We have a serious housing problem. In Dundee the number of council houses exceeds demand but there is a striking shortage of the homes that people want. We have built the wrong type of house. If they had been built in areas that could have been garden suburbs or if they were terrace or semi-detached hoses or could be described as having defensible living space, to use the current jargon, they would be in demand. Instead, we have soulless walk-up blocks. People are voting with their feet. They refuse to take houses in some areas and press for housing association properties in better areas. I find it alarming that the Secretary of State was willing to admit that the condition of the housing stock is catastrophic but that he seems unwilling to provide the resources necessary to do anything about it.

It is worth refreshing our memories of the figures. Some 71,000 houses in urban and rural areas lack inside toilets or hot water supplies, heating, lighting or adequate ventilation and suffer from serious disrepair. We need a massive programme to rectify that—to get rid of what are effectively slum houses. For most of my political career we have described such houses as unacceptable, but, like a blemish on society, they are still with us.

As if that was not bad enough, several hundred thousand houses on modern housing estates built by district councils suffer from dampness or other conditions in which people do not want to live. They tell us of their problems and we batter at the local authorities' doors on their behalf. However, we are aware that local authorities are short of money for rehabilitation work. It is difficult to explain to tenants that the conditions of which they complain — they show us clothing that has gone blue with mould to show how bad their homes are—might be the result of design problems or simply the lack of cash. Nevertheless, it is the tenants who have to live in such conditions.

We shall make a mistake if we ignore the extent of the problem and we shall let our people down if, through our failure to put pressure on the Government, we do not get fresh funds.

I agree with the hon. Member for Stirling that there are several ways of dealing with the problem. I am not against enabling unwanted empty council houses to be converted or improved within the private market. It makes sense that houses that fetch no rent and which may be vandalised because they are standing empty or which may cause a problem to other homes nearby should be put right by the private sector if the public sector is unable to tackle the job.

It is equally right to invite housing associations to take over, say, certain blocks and to concentrate on special housing needs in the inner cities. We should use all the means available to obtain a diversity of housing to satisfy demand. I was pleased to hear the hon. Member for Stirling call on the Government to respect the principle of co-ownership or co-operative housing. The attraction of such building has never been fulfilled in this country, whereas other countries have done much to extend that form of ownership.

We should remove the big brother of the housing management sector and allow people more control over their lives, without exposing them to other problems that can arise. I have in mind people being left bereft if it turns out that the homes that they have bought are in extremely bad repair and they have no money to put them right. In other words, we must maintain a balance.

Many officials and councils do not like the concept of tenant management. Indeed, I sometimes suspect that tenants might not want the responsibility to be wished on them. I agree that it is better to decentralise control over housing to tenants so far as it is possible to do that.

Although we all agree that special needs must be satisfied — sheltered housing, housing for the disabled and houses in the inner cities — we are no longer concerned with the crude "roofs over people's heads" policy that existed in the past, when we talked not so much of building homes but of building housing units. Those very units are today not recognised by people as real homes.

We must consider the rehabilitation of housing. However much we may change the method of management or the type of tenure, we still have the problem of lack of quality. Many existing houses were jerry-built, with concrete shells lacking sufficient insulation or having inadequate ventilation. Many design problems cost a great deal to put right, and while the Government have a duty to help put them right, there is no sign in the Bill that a sound maintenance policy is to be followed.

People suffer draughts in their homes, leaks in their roofs and wood rotting away because the local authority is obliged to extend the period for painting or attending to repairs beyond the usual cycle. Anyone with experience of property will appreciate that it is bad policy not to paint the external woodwork. To do so means a larger bill at a later date. Modernisation schemes for improving our housing stock have largely ground to a halt because of the calamitous decline in the provision of finance by the Government.

I have no objection to increasing discounts for the sale of flats. Indeed, perhaps a provision to that effect should have been included in the original legislation, to which I objected because of the compulsion on local authorities to dispose of the more attractive properties. They were, naturally, the properties that tenants wanted to buy.

I am not saying that there is anything wrong with tenants wishing to purchase the sort of properties they desire, but as the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) pointed out, there also exists the right to rent a reasonable house. Because of the Government's policy, many of the semi-detached and similar houses that people desire are no longer available. That has led to frustration, particularly where a new build policy is not pursued by the local authority.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Would not the valuation of a house have some impact on decisions of that kind? The valuation of a semi-detached house, because it is a more desirable property, will be much higher than that of a third floor flat. To some extent that will compensate for the difference, and the discount will help to compensate more.

Mr. Wilson: In theory the hon. Gentleman adduces a sound argument. It does not work in practice, however, and the Government have recognised that fact by increasing the discounts for properties that people are not keen to take on. After all, living in tenemental property —I will not mention buying a multi-occupation flat, if one were completely daft, or buying a maisonette in a walk-up block — involves the problem of collective maintenance. Private occupiers are bound to be frightened if the roof is in disrepair or if dry rot develops.

I speak of that from experience, because in the early days of my marriage we lived in a tenemental flat which suffered a slight attack of dry rot. We felt great fear and alarm when we received big estimates, before getting a local joiner to do the job, although after the work was done I had to crawl under the basement floor in darkness and scoop up bits of rotting timber that had been left there.

I fear that the Bill does not attempt to get at the root of difficulties that are faced by hundreds of thousands of tenants, and I do not exaggerate when I say that. The hon. Member for Stirling was right to criticise the Government for lacking imagination on this issue. They have failed to live up to the obligations that are placed on them, by virtue of their office, to improve the residential accommodation of many of our citizens.

8.26 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): The one issue on which we can all agree is that housing is vital. It is a subject about which there is a new Bill every year for Scotland, and the same probably applies to England and Wales.

The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) was right to concentrate on the poor quality of much of our housing and the problems about which we hear regularly in our surgeries. They are particularly the problems of dampness and condensation, with the vicious circle that those problems produce. Condensation usually occurs through lack of ventilation, yet tenants in difficult areas cannot go to work and leave their windows open, because of a fear of their houses being vandalised.

I am glad that the Government have recognised that this is a serious issue. I hope that if my hon. Friend has money available for housing in future, more will be spent on improvement grants. Expenditure of that kind in recent years has been the most effective way of improving the nation's housing stock.

We should couple the Bill in broad terms with the building societies Bill which will come later. The more

[Sir Hector Monro]

opportunities that are provided for home ownership, the better, and if the building societies had a wider remit, greater opportunity would be provided for home ownership.

I welcomed my right hon. Friend's remarks about the need to extend the right to buy and I am glad that, through the policy of the purchase of council houses, about £100 million has been ploughed back into housing. I welcome the clause dealing with housing associations in relation to the right to buy, because that, too, will extend home ownership. Will those provisions cover health authorities as well as the regional councils and police and fire service houses? They need a stock of houses to accommodate their staff.

I must say, "Well done, indeed," to the housing associations for the tremendous work that they have done, particularly in making dramatic advances during the past six years. This year's programme involves about £110 million, and this is the fourth consecutive year in which more than £100 million has been spent on new housing accommodation. That is very good news and we should say, "Well done," to the Housing Corporation and the housing associations for their extremely good work. I hope that they will continue to expand their programmes, wherever possible, into rural areas. By that I mean the smaller towns in Scotland, which are keen to have more housing association accommodation and particularly sheltered housing.

Those of us who have seen some of the sheltered housing built in the past few years know how highly commendable it is. I refer particularly to the sheltered housing that helps the disabled and infirm. A nice community spirit is engendered by grouping the houses around a central community center. We must encourage all that, and I hope that the Government will do what they can in that regard.

Tonight I shall concentrate on the wider issue of housing in the countryside. I know that Rural Forum has done much to produce good work on this subject. Indeed, I was glad that my hon. Friend the Minister went to Galloway a few weeks ago to speak to Rural Forum and to show that he believed in its work. We are all keen to try to stem rural depopulation, yet many planning authorities seem to be determined to prevent the construction of houses in the countryside. If we do not have good housing in the countryside, we will end up closing village schools and village halls, and that community spirit that is so vital to the countryside will be lost.

I hope that the enlightened new circular that was introduced a few months ago to replace circular 40/1960 will be welcomed by planning committees. So far, I have seen little evidence that they realise the opportunity presented by the circular to adopt a more flexible approach towards planning in the countryside. Hon. Members will know that the circular that has been in operation for the past 25 years was very restrictive. However beautiful the countryside might or might not be, new building had to be attached to agriculture or forestry. Of course, the number of those employed in agriculture or forestry is falling, and it is unlikely that anyone would want to build new houses for that purpose. Thus, the new circular is welcome.

It is worth pointing out that the guidelines are still carefully drawn so that there will be no impact on green belt areas, or ribbon and scattered developments. Nothing detrimental will happen to the scenic beauty of our country. There is now an opportunity to approve more rural developments than in the past. A good house, built with the right materials and to the right design, often enhances the countryside. One need look only at the farmsteads and houses that were built in the 18th and 19th centuries. They enhance the countryside, and there is no reason why houses built in the 1980s and 1990s should not do the same for the next century.

We have an opportunity to stem the move away from the countryside by making a modest increase in the number of houses built there. We already have an effective appeal system. In the past, reporters have all too frequently been able to found their decisions on the 1960 circular, which has now been replaced. Appeals should now be won more frequently by applicants for planning permission in the countryside. They cannot be turned down purely because of their lack of involvement in agriculture or forestry. In the months and years ahead, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will do more to publicise this valuable change in planning policy, as it seems to be taking far too long to sink into the minds of many planning officials.

I am particularly interested in the countryside and its conservation, but there is nothing frightening about people having the power to give approval to the right developments. No one is saying that that power must be exercised, but perhaps we can now come down more on the side of the applicant if he fulfills all the ideals of quality that I have outlined. Given the importance of housing in the countryside and the quality and quantity of urban housing, I certainly support the Bill.

8.38 pm

Mr. Allen Adams (Paisley, North): By way of an aside, I must say that the Scottish electorate will no doubt take note of the fact that some Conservative Members have suggested that the de-industrialisation of Scotland during the past six years is somehow due, in part or in whole, to the immobility of the Scots. It seems to be suggested that if people would chase factories all over the country, all would be well. It is implied that because Socialist authorities in Scotland built council houses, people became immobile.

The population of Scotland stands at about 5 million, yet there are 20 million people of Scottish descent living outside Scotland. That points to the fact that the Scots are very mobile, and may have been more mobile than they really wanted to be. If there had been more money with which to build more good quality public housing in Scotland, some of those 20 million mobile people might still be in Scotland.

Whether or not the Government like it, municipal Socialism is popular in Scotland. Most of the major housing authorities have been controlled by the Labour party for the past 50 or 60 years. The people have voted that way time and again because Labour local authorities in Scotland have done their job. Unlike some authorities in other parts of the country, who talk about Kit-Kats in canteens, Ireland and about issues involving Africa and Latin America, Labour local authorities in Scotland have got on with their job quietly and efficiently.

Anybody who visits the centre of the city of Glasgow or Paisley and Renfrew can see that, even in the past 20 years, immeasurable and lasting improvements have been made.

Mrs. McCurley: With Conservative Government money.

Mr. Adams: We shall see where you are at the general election.

Mrs. McCurley: Still in the same place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It is not where I will be at the next general election. I shall look after myself.

Mr. Adams: Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

About a week ago I went to Celtic park to see St. Mirren, my local team, play Celtic. My son and I left Celtic park at 5 pm and took a bus along the London road past Bridgeton cross to Argyle street. At one time that was the east end and one of the most notorious parts of any city in Britain. The slums were appalling. Within 30 years what was an unattractive area has become an extremely pleasant one. The change is phenomenal.

The same change occurred in my constituency. Only 20 years ago, when I was going to school, the slums and rabbit warrens still existed, but they do not exist now. The Government and their supporters suggest that all was well when it was left to private enterprise alone, but it was not. In my constituency we had the highest tuberculosis rate in Europe at the turn of the century. We inherited that legacy from private enterprise in the 19th century. It was said that Glasgow had the worst slums in Europe outside Vienna.

People voted Labour in Glasgow and the west of Scotland simply to get rid of the slums, and to be fair to the Labour party, that is exactly what we did—we got rid of the slums. *[Interruption.]* When hon. Gentlemen have finished, I shall continue. That is not to say that we did not make mistakes. They must be freely and frankly admitted. At a huge tenement block about four storeys high in Fergusley park, I counted about 70 children in one close, yet people wonder why we have social problems. Such blocks were certainly errors of planning and judgment. No one regrets more than I do the break up of the extended family that has occurred because of that.

The mistakes were largely brought about because of the great pressure on local authorities to build as many houses as possible, as quickly as possible, to house many people in as short a time as possible. The whole project was greatly under-capitalised. Many contractors seemed to receive more for a three-apartment tenement house than for a three-apartment semi-detached private house. Mistakes were made, but great pressure was exerted on local authorities to build quickly and cheaply. We should not make that mistake in future.

In the public sector we have tended to make it difficult for an individual tenant to identify with his house. There have been far too many silly, bureaucratic and often unnecessary rules. It is nonsense to tell a tenant that before he puts a picture on a wall he must have an inspector come to tell where to put the nail. There is no point in having every door——

Mrs. McCurley: That is Socialism.

Mr. Adams: It is not Socialism, but downright stupidity. There is no point in having every door in one street painted the same colour.

Mrs. McCurley: That is Socialism.

Mr. Adams: The hon. Lady is confused. That is not Socialism, but bureaucratic stupidity. It has nothing whatsoever to do with Socialism.

I understand why people became a little alienated. They always had the feeling that the house did not belong to them, but belonged to factors, and that there was little point in investing money in it. A solution is to devolve power from the centre of our cities and our district housing authorities to the periphery. We should give people a real and meaningful say in how their council houses are run. We want power devolved to the streets. The people in those areas know best how they want to live, and they should be allowed to live as they wish.

The vast majority of people in Scotland continue to live in municipal housing. Frankly, they do not seem to have much choice. There is a great demand for council housing because attitudes in Scotland to public housing are different from those in England, although they are changing. We can argue until the cows come home that that should not be so, or that if this or that had happened in history the position might have been different, but the fact remains that attitudes are and will remain different for the foreseeable future.

The solution is not deliberately to stimulate demand for private housing by creating a vacuum, cutting the sums available to local authorities, rendering authorities unable to build the sort of municipal housing that people want, and then saying, "People do not want the housing anyway. They want private houses built by Barratt and Salvesen." Yet that is what the Government are doing. They are ensuring that people have no alternative.

Let us consider an average couple in their early 20s who are getting married and who were brought up in a decent four-apartment semi-detached council house. They put their name down on the local authority list and ask what the chances are of a decent house. They are frequently told that in a few years they may get a three-apartment flat on the fourth storey of a tenement, but on the other hand that they may not and that they certainly will not get a semi-detached house with a front and back garden. They are forced either to take a house that they do not want—it is not desirable to bring up a family in those circumstances — or go on the open market. They want certain standards—standards have risen, which is a good thing —and to bring up a family in a good environment.

Mrs. McCurley: Will the hon. Gentleman give me an idea of the number of his colleagues who live in local authority housing and the number who live in private housing? Will he say why those who live in private housing do so?

Mr. Adams: I am coming to that point. It is always suggested—wrongly—that the Labour party is against people owning houses.

Mrs. McCurley: The hon. Gentleman said so.

Mr. Adams: No, I do not say that. I said that the economic reality makes it difficult for people to buy houses. There is nothing wrong with the principle of buying a house, but it is difficult to do so. People are being deprived because local authorities are being starved of the funds to build proper and substantial council properties.

[Mr. Adams]

The young average couple whom I mentioned are then forced to go to Barratts, Salvesen or whoever else is building houses. Incidentally, some of the houses are insubstantial and may create problems in 20 years' time.

Many young couples are being robbed of their youth. Every penny that they earn has to be spent on their house. They cannot move, and they cannot go out. Everything down to the last cigarrette must be budgeted for. Young couples are putting off having families until their mid or late 20s because they are up to their necks in mortgage repayments.

Mr. David Marshall: Does my hon. Friend have the same experience in his constituency as I have in mine? It is one which, unfortunately, is increasing. Families who are owner-occupiers come to local councillors or myself to see whether we can assist them to obtain a council or housing association house because they have been unable to keep up high mortgage payments or have lost their jobs as a result of the Government's policies. The Bill will do nothing to help those people. It will make it more difficult for them to be housed.

Mr. Adams: My hon. Friend is correct. Many people come to my surgery every month looking for local authority housing because they have lost their jobs. Many of my constituents have lost their jobs. The state is expected to pick up the tab and provide those people with housing, yet it is being under-financed and put into a difficult position. I, like my hon. Friend, have noticed that that problem is growing alarmingly.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is aware that some building societies are giving redundancy insurance with mortgages. The cost per month is trivial. As he said, people take out a 20-year contract. They assume that if they lose their jobs the state will pick up the tab. I should be happy to see it made compulsory for building societies to build redundancy insurance into the mortgage.

Mr. Adams: I have no objection to that proposal. As my hon. Friend has said, many people are being forced to seek local authority housing because they have been evicted from the house that they were attempting to buy because they have lost their jobs. That point should be rammed home.

The state is trying to renege on its obligation to maintain the housing stock. For example, the grant available to repair and maintain roofs in the private sector has been cut from 90 to 50 per cent. When, in the last century, the state withdrew from its obligation to maintain the housing stock and it was left to laissez-faire capitalism, we had appalling housing. Glasgow had the worst housing in Europe. My constituency had some appalling housing, which resulted in premature deaths. Intolerable housing conditions resulted in a life expectancy of 40 to 45 years. The Labour party's policies changed that. I say to the people who want to buy the council houses that those houses would not have existed if it had not been for men like John Wheatley and the Labour party. During the early part of the century they built many of the council houses that those people now wish to purchase.

Does the Minister agree, as his Department apparently does, that three quarters of all public expenditure cuts in Scotland over the past five years have fallen on housing? What does he say about housing expenditure which has been cut by 31 per cent. in real terms since 1979? I ask the Minister to answer those points when he replies.

8.54 pm

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): I recommend all Opposition Members who have been elected since the Government came to office to read Labour's consultative document on Scottish housing published in June 1977. I am glad to see that the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan), who subscribed so much to that document, is in the Chamber yet again for one of our housing debates. If the hon. Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams) had read the Labour Government's Green Paper he would have learnt a great deal to his advantage, not least on mobility, to which he referred.

Page 38, paragraph 4.13, of that document states:

"People should be able to move from area to area as job opportunities change. If the housing system makes this difficult, it hinders Scotland's economic progress . . . or where ready access to local authority sector depends on residential qualification."

We put that anomaly right under the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980. We removed applicants' dependence on residential qualifications. The document continued:

"The problem is aggravated by the decline of the private rented sector which in the past was able to offer temporary accommodation to incomers until longer-term housing was available. Public sector allocation policies must try to ensure that the advantages to industry and the community of facilitating mobility are balanced realistically against the needs of local residents."

I hope the hon. Member for Paisley, North will accept that Conservative Members have said that mobility has been a problem and that a factor in that problem was the large public rented housing sector.

Mr. Allen Adams: It is a question of the Sabbath being made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that we should move all the people to the factory or move the factory to the people?

Mr. Henderson: That brings me to the next point in the hon. Gentleman's speech. The hon. Gentleman accepted that great mistakes had been made in the past. I honour him for being straightforward about that. We are all aware of that. Few people can avoid blame.

Those mistakes were exacerbated by Socialism for one reason if for no other — the lack of a substantial alternative market prevented people from showing their preferences and having them responded to in the market place. He referred to houses built by Salvesen. The private sector's great achievement is that it responds to the needs of the market place. It provides the houses that people want. If the market place had determined the type of houses built during the 1950s and 1960s at the time of the council house boom we would have far better council houses today, but no, the Socialist planners knew better. Nowhere did they know about it better than in the Scottish new towns. Most of the people who planned the new town houses lived outside those towns.

I welcome the Bill. It has a number of excellent features. Some are better known than others. We all know that one of the Bill's important features extends the right to purchase to housing association tenants. Perhaps even better known is the fact that it will increase the discount available on sales of flats under the right-to-buy policy.

That is good. There are many other useful provisions in the Bill, but I will deal with two relatively minor but important points.

Under clause 11 and schedule 1, as the explanatory and financial memorandum says:

"The period within which a person who has purchased his house under the right to purchase shall be liable to repay all or a proportion of the discount received is reduced from 5 to 3 years."

When we were going through the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Bill, we spent some time on that question. It was a matter of concern that people might do quick deals that were not beneficial to housing or to the objectives of the Bill. I think that we were over-cautious and that, in the light of the experience with the sales of council houses, the reduction of the period can be seen as a beneficial provision. It will help in cases where otherwise there might have been unfairness and hardship when people's circumstances changed and they had to move house through no choice of their own.

As the explanatory and financial memorandum says:

"Clause 10 restores a ground for recovery of possession of a dwelling house: that the landlord wishes to transfer the tenancy to one of the parties to a marriage, or other relationship, which has broken down, the other partner having hitherto been the tenant."

That will be a very helpful provision, and I welcome it.

Earlier in the debate, there was reference to the mistakes of the past, and to a need for a house condition survey. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to it, as did the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson). I agree with the Government that a house condition survey would be a waste of time and money. We do not need to be told the extent of some of the past mistakes which urgently require action.

I served on the Select Committee which examined the problem of dampness in houses. We identified several of the problems, and concentrated the minds of some of the experts on the need to find solutions to them. The Select Committee's report was valuable. We do not need more surveys to tell us the scale of the problem. We need a consensus and an understanding of the scale of the problem and the priority that must be given to it if it is to be solved.

Failure to tackle the problem has not been due to lack of money from the Government; it has been due to the refusal of many local authorities, particularly those most seriously affected—notably Glasgow—to give the same priority that hon. Members generally feel should be given to the rehabilitation of houses which suffer from dampness or the errors of the past. Indeed, Glasgow forwent over £5 million that it could have had for that sort of work because it insisted on a low-rent policy which simply transferred the cost of housing benefit from the taxpayer to the ratepayer.

The housing associations are currently running a campaign for still more public money. The extreme case is that of the Tayside, Grampian and Fife forum of housing associations, which is urging that the Government should provide more money for housing associations. The secretary of the association said that the associations were

"having to postpone much-needed developments because of cuts in Government funding".

That was in the *Courier* of 2 November, which reports that he

"warned yesterday that continued under-funding could lead to a return to slum conditions for many people".

Those words would cause anxiety to any of us. But, in the same piece of mail from that gentleman, there is a coloured glossy brochure telling of the progress of housing associations in Grampian, Tayside and Fife. It says:

"Investment by housing associations funded by the Housing Corporation"—

that is taxpayers' money—

"in Grampian, Tayside and North Fife over the past five years is shown graphically below. The upward trend is clearly visible."

Investment has risen from just over £2·5 million to over £17·5 million during the lifetime of this Government. Far from underfunding, that is an eightfold growth. The housing association movement requires a better campaign than that if it wishes to obtain more taxpayers' money.

The convenor of housing in north-east Fife district—who should know better but was clearly caught up with this kind of nonsense—said:

"In this area we have a large and increasingly elderly population."

That is true. He continued:

"This Government's claim that they are caring and have the interests of the elderly at heart has now been exposed."

Yet the truth is that in 1979, when the Government came to office, there were 12,570 sheltered houses in Scotland. There are now 34,438, so nearly twice as many have been built by the Goverment as they inherited.

In north-east Fife, there were 42 sheltered houses in 1979. There are now 318—seven and a half times as many — and the Liberal chairman of the housing committee in north-east Fife does not even know it.

9.4 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I am proud that, when I served on Glasgow district council, I saw the community-based housing associations develop in a big way. I am proud of my connection with the Assist project in Govan when I was a councillor. The project was run by a development officer, Raymond Young, who is now the director of the Housing Corporation in Scotland. He is doing an excellent job. I watched the Mansel-St. Monance housing associations develop into the Springburn-Possil Parliamentary housing association in my area of Springburn.

It is not fair for Conservative Members to criticise housing associations in Glasgow. Those associations would say that the co-operation that they have had from Glasgow district council officials has been second to none. The council has set up a department to work with community-based housing associations. One need only to go through any Glasgow district to see the evidence of rehabilitated tenements—the type of work that could not go on unless the district council and the housing corporation co-operated.

Governments of both persuasions have been helpful to housing associations. However, this Government are cutting expenditure. I should like the Under-Secretary of State to reassure the House and the housing associations that expenditure will not be cut. About 90 per cent. of the people involved in housing associations are volunteers. In effect, they are doing the job of local government and central Government.

I have corresponded with the Under-Secretary of State about a housing co-operative that has been set up in Possil Park. This local authority area has deteriorated to such an extent that few people will take a house in it and the majority who live there want to leave. The co-operative was set up to get the houses made wind and watertight. It

[Mr. Michael J. Martin]

is an indictment of society that, in this day and age, people need to set up an organisation to achieve that objective. The people want to modernise their houses. By forming a co-operative they have, in effect, set up a housing association. The Under-Secretary of State has told me that there is not enough money to go around and that Possil Park will not be included in the first round of new housing co-operatives in district council areas.

I ask the Under-Secretary of State, as a second option, to allow the Possil Park co-operative to be registered with the Housing Corporation. That would give the people the power to borrow money. They would be under the wing of the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *rose——*

Mr. Martin: I am sorry; if I had the time, I would give way.

A number of tenement dwellers in Balmore road in Possil Park want their houses to be rehabilitated. The Springburn-Possil Park housing association is willing to do that work. Unfortunately, Glasgow has many mines which were worked out many years ago and the foundations are unstable. This may also be a problem in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall). The Scottish Development Association is responsible for strengthening foundations before modernisation is carried out, but there does not seem to be any liaison between the housing corporation and the SDA. Consequently, these houses cannot be modernised. It would a pity if they had to be demolished, but that is what will happen unless something is done about it.

I am disappointed that the Bill contains no provision for improving the quality of life of those who live in multi-storey flats. Certain right hon. and hon. Members have described them as concrete mausoleums. Some of the multi-storey flats in Glasgow are in very high demand. Before the points system was introduced people had to wait for 10 or 12 years before they were housed, and pensioners were housed in multi-storey flats in my constituency that are now being vandalised.

Vandals are doing a great deal of damage. It is a pity that money cannot be provided to ensure protection for those who live in multi-storey flats. Nobody is prepared to take on the responsibility of protecting property. Populations equal to the size of a small village live in multi-storey flats but no protection is provided for them. Lifts are put out of action by vandals. People with heart conditions and other serious medical problems then have to climb the stairs to reach their flats on the 19th or 20th storeys. If security were provided for multi-storey flats that type of vandalism could be avoided and the people who live in them would have peace of mind. They would be able to go out at night without having to fear the kind of vandalism that I have described.

I am disappointed that the Bill contains no provison to encourage the setting up of community-based housing associations in new developments. Many housing associations have modernised their properties. They have also earmarked sites for new development. The Secretary of State for Scotland said that he intended to cut through the red tape, but he did not point out that the community-based housing associations have a great deal of red tape to cut through before they can build the type of sheltered housing that was referred to by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

If the Secretary of State is serious about providing good housing for those who live in constituencies that are similar to mine, he should consider encouraging housing associations to build new houses. It is nonsense for the Secretary of State to say that, because few flats are being sold, he will provide bigger discounts. He thinks that few flats are being sold because people worry about the responsibility for common repairs.

All that I can say is that the Secretary of State does not know Glasgow or Edinburgh, because the majority of people in those cities have had to put up with common repairs, and that has not been a deterrent and will not be one in the future. The Secretary of State knows that many of the tenements and housing estates in Glasgow are in a deplorable condition and that the local authority cannot even let such properties, let alone sell them. We need not discounts but rehabilitation to get rid of dampness and to improve the quality of life in the tenements before we get on with the business of selling them. Discounts are not the answer.

9.15 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I begin by agreeing with one or two points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin). One of those points is that put to him by the Possil park steering committee, which has been in touch with me as well—only today, I spoke to the secretary on the phone. If my hon. Friend joins me in the Committee on the Bill, we shall put down amendments to try to ensure that the Minister does something about this.

I agree also that some high-rise flats within Glasgow are highly desirable, and people want to live in them. There are two such blocks in Mount Florida, in my constituency. That is the area of Glasgow in which the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food believes that all the farmers reside. These flats are highly desirable; one of the reasons for that is that they overlook Hampden park and with a good pair of binoculars, one can watch the games from the top flats.

Having watched Tory Members come and go tonight —they have gone more often—and heard of the events within the Conservative Back-Bench committee, I am reminded of a story told by the hon. Member for Aldershot (Mr. Critchley). Just after the election he was sitting on the Government Benches when a young Conservative sat beside him. The young Member turned to the hon. Member for Aldershot and said, looking at the Opposition Benches, "It is nice to be able to sit here and look our enemies in the eye." The hon. Member for Aldershot said, "No, you have got it wrong. Those people over there are our opponents. Our enemies are behind us." How true that is of the Scottish Conservative party today.

The Conservative party in Scotland, with constituency parties threatening mass resignations, the candidates association up in arms and refusing to support the Government, with the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) — he made a speech, but he has not yet returned—wanting to drag ex-Conservative candidates to the Bar of the House because of what he considers to be contempt, while he organises a putsch against the chairman of the Back Bench committee, with the 1922 Committee changing the rules tonight to ensure that that

does not happen again, with Back Benchers ensuring that the chairman of the Conservatives on the Select Committee remains the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro)—another decision that has been taken tonight—is in chaos. Despite all this, these people spend most of their speeches demanding what our policies are, saying that we are disunited and claiming that they represent the party with the popular policies in Scotland.

However, in election after election—district, regional or general—Scottish Conservatives go down and down. They will lose control of the regional elections next May. The hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone), for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) and for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) will not be here, and neither will the Minister. Hon. Member after hon. Member from the Scottish Conservative party will be knocked out. They claim that their housing policies are popular with the people of Scotland, but the district elections, in particular, proved that their housing policies are not popular. Housing is the function that district authorities have. It is almost the only function that they have. In Glasgow, in district council after district council, it is the Labour party that is returned and as my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mr. Adams) said, it is the Labour party that is popular in Scotland.

Mr. Malone: If the policies are so unpopular, will the hon. Gentleman undertake, from that Dispatch Box, to reverse them if the Labour party comes into office?

Mr. Maxton: There are many aspects of the Government's housing policy that we shall be reversing when we come into power. I can assure the hon. Gentleman of that. Conservative Members have an obsession with our housing policy and what we are going to do after the next election but the question is worth asking only if they believe that we will win the next election. It does not have any meaning if we do not win. I know that we will win—*[Interruption.]*—and I am glad to hear that Conservative Members believe the same thing.

I want to ask the Minister the question that was put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Why is the Bill put before us today? What change has taken place in the past 12 months that means that we suddenly have to give tenants in housing associations the right to buy and that we have to change the discount for the sale of council houses? What has happened is that the Secretary of State said in August 1984 that he fully approved of the voluntary sales scheme practised by the housing associations. The Minister shook his head earlier on that. I want to know whether he is calling all the witnesses a bunch of liars, or will he give us a different story? We want to know why it has happened.

I believe that that has happened for two reasons. First, as my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden said, it is the lifebelt, or whatever one likes to call it, for the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton). It is the attempt to save that tiny 500 majority. He was not present when I was naming the hon. Members who will not be here after the next election, but I would certainly add him to the list. Secondly, it is because of the obsession that the Conservative party has with home ownership. Conservatives seem to believe that our society and our industrial position will improve in a home-owning democracy. I am delighted to see that Conservative Members are nodding happily. But let us look at some of the international examples of home ownership to see whether their argument about higher industrial output and more flexibilty in the economy is true.

The country with the highest gross national product in Europe, in fact one of the highest in the world, is Switzerland. That country has a 30 per cent. owner-occupation rate. West Germany has a 37 per cent. owner-occupation rate and Sweden has 38 per cent. Are Conservative Members saying that those countries are dismal failures because they do not have an owner-occupation rate that is equivalent to ours? That is not the case. One can go further. I know that it is a meaningless statistic, but the country that has the highest owner-occupation rate is Bangladesh, with the lowest gross national product in the world. I shall not make any great point. I do not think that it follows that there is a link between owner-occupation and the economy. But Conservative Members cannot argue that if we increase the owner-occupation rate in Scotland we shall somehow improve our economy and achieve greater mobility of labour.

Some of the people in my constituency who are in owner-occupied tenement property that has not been taken over and improved by housing associations are trapped into owner-occupation because major structural repairs are required and they cannot sell the property. Even if they happen to get a job, even if they manage to find the place somewhere in Britain where jobs are still available, they cannot move because they cannot sell the property that they own. That is as much a trap, if not more, as being tenants in council houses.

The obsession with owner-occupation does not extend to tenants of privately owned property. I never understood why the Minister and his hon. Friends believe that somehow they must extend owner-occupation only to local authority tenants and never to those who rent property in the private sector.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak): It is taxpayers' money.

Mr. Maxton: Let me explain. My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) and I have houses in our constituencies that were built and are owned by the Western Heritable Investment Company. They were built with taxpayers' money in the 1930s. Those properties have no discount on them. They are sold, but at high prices, and rarely to sitting tenants. No right to buy is available to the tenants. Equally, large numbers of other privately tenanted properties in Scotland are suitable for habitation because of taxpayers' money, because grants have been given to the owners to make them habitable. That is the only reason why they are habitable. I gather that tenants in property owned by Lothian Estates——

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Lothian Estates has received no grants.

Mr. Maxton: My hon. Friend is wrong. I gather that Lothian Estates has received large grants to put the houses right, yet the tenants do not have the right to buy at a discount.

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman has refused to tell the House whether his party would take away the right

[Mr. Henderson]

to buy. He now sounds as if he is against the improvements grants that the Government approve of. Will he take them as well?

Mr. Maxton: To imagine that we opposed improvement grants is ridiculous.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxton: I shall not give way. I have given way enough. The time available to me has been cut short by my allowing Conservative Members to make interventions.

If the Government hold the ideal of extending home ownership, I do not understand why they limit it to the public sector, not the private sector.

With his usual skill, my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden dealt with the case against the Bill. I should like to take up a couple of his points, particularly his point about extending home ownership. It is astonishing that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) should make a passionate plea for more rented accommodation in Scotland and at the same time support a Bill that will remove rented accommodation from Scotland. That is exactly what giving tenants the right to buy from housing associations will do. It will take rented accommodation away from housing associations.

Mr. Fletcher: The hon. Gentleman might just acknowledge the fact that I referred to the 2,400 empty local authority houses in Edinburgh and suggest one way in which they could be rented to those who want accommodation.

Mr. Maxton: Of course we want all the empty accommodation to be rented, although many of the houses in the public sector that the hon. Gentleman claims are vacant are not because they are not fit for habitation due to dampness and other defects, which are not repaired because of the cuts imposed by the Government on local authorities. That is why properties are empty now.

The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) is not present, but he gave us a remarkable historical analysis of housing in Glasgow which completely ignored the enormous slums that existed there right up until the 1940s. He also said that housing associations were part of the large bureaucracy of local council tenancies. He seemed to ignore what the Bill was about. Most housing associations in Scotland are community based, with the committee that controls them made up of volunteers elected by the tenants to run those housing associations. How he could call that a faceless bureaucracy is beyond me.

The Government's dismal failure to consult those housing associations, combined with the fact that the housing associations will no longer be able to control their housing policy because of the right to buy and the enormous anomalies that will be created by the discount system in the housing associations, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden referred, will lead to many of the most experienced volunteers within the housing association movement chucking it in. We shall lose many good housing experts as a result. All right, they are volunteers, but they have been in the business for many years and many of them will say that enough is enough and that they are no longer interested.

If we give tenants the right to buy we shall go back to exactly the sort of circumstances that the housing associations were formed to stop — multiple ownership of tenemental properties in cities such as Glasgow. There are such properties in my constituency. They are not owned by housing associations but by individuals. Some parts are owner-occupied while others are privately rented. If there is a major structural fault in the roof those who suffer are those who live in the top flat. It might be five years before the dampness reaches the ground floor. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Stirling makes a lot of noise but I hear about this week in and week out at my surgeries. People come to me with the problem of how to get people together to ensure that repairs are carried out. Even when a section 24 order is imposed by a local authority it may take two or three years before the work is done.

Housing associations have done a magnificent job in stopping that particular problem. If we now start selling housing association property within these tenements so that some still belong to the housing associations while the majority are owned by tenants, even the factoring rights of the housing association may be lost. If we get that we are returning to the situation of multiple ownership that housing associations were formed in the first place to cure.

My other objection to the Bill is the discounts that it makes available. Even if one accepts the principle of the right to buy, it is not right that such discounts should be given. The Minister has made the great claim that his policy of selling council houses is a success. The fact that he is changing the discounts in the two ways is evidence that the policy has failed completely. What Labour Members said would happen in Committee in 1980 is happening. That was that it would be the best houses and not the flats that would be sold. It would be houses in rural areas and in smaller district councils that would be sold, not those in the city areas. That is exactly what has happened.

Mrs. McCurley: Ridiculous.

Mr. Maxton: The hon. Lady says that that is ridiculous, but 88 per cent. of properties sold by local authorities up to the end of March were houses, and only 12 per cent. were maisonettes and flats. That is why the policy has been a dismal failure.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: That is why we need a Bill.

Mr. Maxton: It demonstrates that the policy has failed and should be withdrawn completely, not that a Bill is needed.

The period during which the discount must be repaid has been reduced from five years to three years. There are flats in Glasgow, in Mosspark and Knightswood, that could sell for their market value of £27,000 or £28,000, but which will be sold for under £10,000. Within three years, those houses could be sold for almost £30,000 if inflation is taken into account—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) would love to see that return on his capital investment.

The Bill is a dangerous irrelevance because it detracts from the major housing problems of Scotland. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. McTaggart) was correct to say that we wish people to have a choice of houses; but that choice must be equal. A person who buys his house has a decent environment, whereas those who live in council houses face dampness, lack of repair,

ever-increasing rents above the rate of inflation and a poor environment linked with social deprivation and unemployment. That is what the Government have done to the council house tenants who do not buy their houses, and that is why we shall vote against the Bill.

9.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) on his maiden speech from the Dispatch Box, although we have seen him there at Question Time. We greeted his appointment with interest, especially for its effect on the image of the Scottish Labour Front Bench, which is now 25 per cent. educated in the state system and 75 per cent. educated outside. That compares fairly with the four Ministers, two of whom were state educated. I am sure that this will improve the style of the Opposition front Bench. After five years' experience, it needs that improvement.

With some disappointment I have to say that the hon. Member for Cathcart is no quieter than his predecessor, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen). I pay a sincere tribute to the hon. Member for Maryhill for his work on the Opposition Front Bench.

The debate shows the fundamental differences between the two sides of the House.

Mr. Maxton: Will the Minister answer the questions?

Mr. Ancram: I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's questions later. He signally failed to answer the only question that he was asked. Our arguments are based on realism and common sense and the Opposition's argument is based on confusion mixed with ideology, which is an indigestible cocktail.

The Bill has been welcomed by Conservative Members because it provides an extension of choice. Indeed, some of my hon. Friends pressed me to go further. The speech of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was interesting because he spoke, not on the principle but on the detail. Perhaps he does not intend to serve on the Committee; he was dealing with the Committee stage on the Floor of the House.

The speech of the hon. Member for Cathcart was in strict contradistinction. He used the opportunity to launch what I cannot call a new political attack, but it was a political attack none the less. It is charming to note that he believes that if he says over and over again that the Labour party is popular in Scotland it will help him at the next election. He named several Conservative Members who he said would lose their seats at the next election, but I recollect him doing much the same in 1981. He named me and several of my hon. Friends and said that we would not be returning to the House. If his predictions are a correct as they were last time, we should be extremely pleased by his remarks.

The debate devolved into several areas, the first of which was resources for housing. It is surprising to hear repeated claims of reductions and cuts in public sector housing in Scotland, when last year £50 million more was made available for the current year than was available in the previous year—an increase of nearly 25 per cent. It is also difficult to understand the claim that the Government are presiding over deteriorating private housing in Scotland. We inherited about 121,000 sub-tolerable standard houses in 1979, and by March this year the figure had been reduced to 63,000.

The hon. Member for Garscadden talked a great deal about a house condition survey. I have always been prepared to consider such a survey, provided that I can be persuaded that it would provide more and better information than is available to me now. I am continually told to consider the English example, but were I to use the sample size taken in England we should have had a sample of 900 houses across Scotland. It would be ridiculous to suggest that, on the experience of 900 houses, we could get any information in terms of specific need or of geographical breakdown which is not already available to us. A series of ad hoc surveys, the labour force survey and the housing check list provide us with a picture of the problems in Scotland.

The hon. Member for Garscadden accused the Government of cutting housing finances. I wish to quote some figures that were published in a parliamentary answer to the hon. Member for Maryhill on 11 November 1985. The figures show the gross capital expenditure by all the housing agencies, local authorities, housing corporations, the Scottish Special Housing Association and the new towns for certain years. In 1974-75, at the beginning of the Labour Government's period of office, gross capital expenditure was £1,197 million. By 1978-79, it had decreased to £575 million. I am talking in real terms. On the same basis, during the six years that we have been in office, the figure has decreased to £519 million. When one considers that more than half of the reduction took place under the Labour Government, it is hard to take the accusations that they have been throwing at us.

Mr. McKelvey: The Minister may be surprised to learn that he may have an ally as regards the value of a housing survey. The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs said clearly—I am sure that the Minister will accept the figures—that Scotland needs about £157 million to start to cure the problem of dampness. No housing survey would do other than underline that. Of course, the Minister did not provide the money. He provided only a small amount — about £3 million — to tackle that huge problem.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman knows that we considered the Select Committee's report carefully, and that it was reflected in the 25 per cent. increase in the housing revenue account allocations that we made last year. Within that 25 per cent., we said that we had supplemented what would otherwise have been given by £16 million directly to reflect the problems of condensation and dampness. Of course, we did not believe that that was the only money that needed to be spent on solving the problem, but we believed that, by giving that enhancement, we would encourage local authorities to undertake such work.

The second general subject in the debate was the right to buy. I agree with my hon. Friends who said that this policy has been popular, not only because it has enabled people to buy but because it has given a right to buy to people who may not wish to exercise it now but who may wish to exercise it in the future. Every survey carried out in Scotland shows that that policy is popular.

Mr. Martin: Is the Minister aware that some property owned by housing associations is not necessarily being modernised because the necessary capital is being delayed? Will he allow sitting tenants in unmodernised property to buy their homes?

Mr. Ancram: The sitting tenants of housing associatons have precisely the same rights as other public sector tenants. The restrictions announced in the Bill relate to the discount which can be applied if modernisation has taken place so that the overall discount is not more than the outstanding debt on the house.

The hon. Members for Garscadden and for Cathcart failed to answer a simple question: Do they support the right to buy? I began to ask that question in November 1983. I was told then that it was too early after the election and that the Opposition had not formulated their policy. I have asked the question on a number of subsequent occasions and have always been told that they are thinking about it. They have failed to give an answer again tonight. They have not even provided half an answer; they have not given any answer. Perhaps the hon. Member for Garscadden would like to speak on Labour's housing policy for Scotland? Having listened to the debate and compared it with other comments from the hon. Gentleman's colleagues, I find it difficult to understand what that policy is.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said on 9 June this year:

"There is nothing particularly Socialist about public landlordism on a grand scale. After all, Socialism is about real choice and giving people control over their own lives."

That suggests, as the Labour party conference suggested, that there is a weakening in the opposition to the right to buy.

I read a letter sent to a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) from Mr. Alex Wood of the City of Edinburgh district council, who is a Labour councillor. In it Mr. Wood says:

"We are not only opposed to Council house sales, but while recognising that legally we cannot stop them, we will do nothing which makes such sales easier or quicker and indeed will do all in our power to convince potential buyers of the immorality of such sales".

That is another Labour voice speaking.

The hon. Member for Cathcart, who is the Labour party spokesman on these matters, said that the right to buy is an irrelevance. He may be interested to know that Glasgow district council, by its own calculations, will overshoot its receipts estimate by about £2 million this year, and that council has not exactly gone out of its way to sell council houses.

The hon. Member for Cathcart calls that an irrelevance, but the extra £2 million could have allowed the Glasgow district council to modernise an extra 620 houses within Glasgow. He may think that it is an irrelevance, but I suspect that the tenants of those 620 houses would not see it as such. The right to buy as it relates to housing associations——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Ancram: I have given way on a number of occasions, so I shall not give way now.

The first accusation made by the hon. Member for Garscadden was that the Government were not sufficiently financing Scottish housing associations. I find that hard to accept in view of the sums of money made available to the associations by the Labour Government.

The housing association movement in Scotland in 1985-86 will have a capital programme of about £110 million. That will be the fourth consecutive year in which the programme has exceeded £100 million. In the six years since 1980-81, capital expenditure by housing associations in Scotland will be more than £600 million. That reflects Government support for the housing associations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) said, when pressed the housing associations have to concede that.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) said that there is no demand or need for the Bill. He wanted to know why we had introduced it. If there is no demand, and if there are no tenants of housing associations who wish to buy the houses in which they are living, I fail to see why the associations are so concerned about the Bill. I believe that they are concerned because they know that some of their tenants have wished to buy at a discount on the same basis as other public sector tenants. They are in housing which has been built by public money and they have been prevented from buying by the failure of the associations to operate the voluntary code.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a strong demand among the tenants of housing associations to purchase with a discount and not to be disadvantaged in comparison with other public sector tenants in Scotland and in the rest of Britain? Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that the demand is present in much general needs housing throughout Edinburgh and is not confined to certain housing association schemes?

Mr. Ancram: That has been my impression too. I have received a number of representations as a constituency Member and as a Minister. We have received letters from tenants who have felt resentful for a long time because they were within the only group excluded from a right that was otherwise universally available. They realised that the right was available to those south of the border.

The hon. Member for Garscadden wanted to know what was wrong with the voluntary code and asked why it was not working. Of the 72 associations which were expected to operate the code, 24 chose to adopt the policies that firmly precluded sales and 15 have yet to decide their policy after all this time. That is not a sign that the code has been working. If that needs to be proved, we have only to consider the pathetic number of houses that have been sold at a discount by the association over the past years.

Mr. Maxton: What did the Secretary of State have to say about that?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman refers to some remarks that my right hon. Friend is alleged to have made. The reports which I have read in the newspapers are based on a misrepresentation of what my right hon. Friend said. he made it clear—he has repeated this since—that the continuation of a voluntary policy was dependent upon a more effective response from associations. That response has not been forthcoming, and for that reason we have taken legislative steps.

The hon. Member for Garscadden remarked on the effect that the Bill, when enacted, would have on the rented sector. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) that we would like to see a healthy rented sector and that we shall be looking for ways in which that can be encouraged and promoted. It is going rather far for the hon. Member for Garscadden

suddenly to be concerned for the rented sector when it was his party which effectively slit the throat of the private rented sector.

The hon. Member for Garscadden raised a point of detail about the printing of the Housing Associations Bill. I hope that it will be possible for the Bill to be printed in time for the Committee stage. If it is not, we shall ensure that photocopies are available for the Committee that considers the Bill.

The hon. Member for Garscadden talked about arrangements for flats in tenements and four-in-a-block flats as well as for high rise flats. The definition of a flat is widely drawn, it is closely similar to that which appears in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966, which was introduced by a Labour Government. The definition has been widely drawn deliberately. The measure is not aimed primarily at multi-storey blocks. Flats of all types have sold more slowly than other properties, and that includes tenement flats and four-in-a-block flats as well as multi-storey flats. The exceptions are certain blocks which are popular. If we were to introduce exceptions to the definition, we would make it more complex and would undermine the basic purpose of the provision.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked also about charitable status in section 360 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970. The Bill provides an exemption to the right to buy for charitable associations that are registered under the Charities Act 1960. That is necessary if we are to avoid specific conflict with statutory registration.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked about a guarantee. There is no question of a guarantee from the Inland Revenue about sales at a discount. It could not be given. This is a complex area and we will be able to discuss it in greater detail in Committee.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of other questions, but I have not the time to deal with them all. He asked about the discount varying, depending on whether the tenancy was in the public or private sector.

Mr. Dewar: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way as I realise he has only a few minutes left. I can hardly believe my ears. If a charitable association in Scotland sells one of its houses under the discount arrangements, which, as far as I can make out, it has to do under the Bill, can the Minister give any assurance that it will be able to preserve its charitable status and the tax advantages which go with that?

Mr. Ancram: If they are registered under the Charities Act 1960 — several are — they are exempted. I understood the hon. Gentleman to be asking a wider question, which is complex and will have to be explored in greater detail in Committee.

The hon. Member for Garscadden and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) asked about the fact that the discounts would vary depending on whether the previous tenancy had been in the public or private sector. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Garscadden finds this difficult to accept because it is precisely how the law has operated in relation to the right to buy with regard to public sector tenancies. There will be no change from the present law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) asked about the position of tenants whose houses are owned by Grampian region but let by Aberdeen district, and whether the Bill would give them the right to buy. We have been concerned for some time that certain district councils have sold houses to regional councils which then leased them back to district councils which then sublet them to their tenants. The result was that the tenants lost their right to buy because the district council was not the owner of the property. However, once regional council tenants are given the right to buy the Secretary of State will be able to use his existing powers under section 1*(a)* of the Tenants Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 to intervene on behalf of tenants who would otherwise be denied their rights.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross talked about the complexity of the legislation. I apologise to him for the fact that in many respects, the legislation is difficult, but this arises partly because we are amending legislation which was so perfectly drafted in his days as Solicitor-General for Scotland. He also asked whether there was still scope for local authorities to frustrate the right-to-buy legislation. I share my hon. and learned Friend's concern about councils which use delays and other tactics to discourage purchasers.

The 1980 Act gave tenants some important safeguards, including the right to have recourse to the Lands Tribunal to resolve certain disputes. We believe that these safeguards could be strengthened. That is why the Bill includes new powers to intervene on behalf of tenants who are experiencing difficulties. My hon. and learned Friend also spoke about clause 7, the mobility scheme and his difficulties with this clause. Under existing schemes which help tenants to move the fact that the tenant who wishes to move or exchange to another already has a home is not a consideration in deciding whether he could be eligible for assistance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) raised several specific points — those which I cannot cover I will reply to later. My hon. Friend asked why there was no provision to prise derelict or rundown local authority property out of the hands of local authorities and to put it into the hands of willing developers. I heartily encourage such trends, and I am willing to discuss and consider any ideas along those lines with the developers and with the authorities.

This Bill is about a simple and fundamental principle. The principle is that a basic and popular right should be available to the widest possible number of people, if not to all — it is fundamentally wrong for a right to be prohibited to one category of people for unsustainable reasons—and it is the sort of right which is included in the right to buy and to own one's own home. We are not forcing, nor have we ever forced, anybody to buy his own home. We are giving people a right to do so if they wish. We have protected the rights of individuals in legislation that we have passed previously and are doing so again today. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:-

The House divided: Ayes 164, Noes 70.

Division No. 13] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Amess, David	Baldry, Tony
Ancram, Michael	Batiste, Spencer
Arnold, Tom	Bellingham, Henry
Aspinwall, Jack	Benyon, William
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Blackburn, John

Body, Richard
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Coombs, Simon
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McQuarrie, Albert
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Morris, M. *(N'hampton, S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Watson, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barron, Kevin
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Ewing, Harry
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freud, Clement
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Redmond, M.
Robertson, George
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Welsh, Michael
Wilson, Gordon
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Ray Powell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

HOUSING (SCOTLAND) BILL [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Housing (Scotland) Bill ("the Act") it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any—

(a) sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants, loans or other payments, and for any other expenses of his, by virtue of the Act;

(b) administrative expenses incurred by him by virtue thereof;

(c) increase attributable to the provisions of the Act in the sums which under any other enactment are paid out of money so provided; and

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums failing to be paid into that Fund by virtue of the Act.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

SUMMER TIME

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Summer Time Order 1985 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 23rd July, in the last Session of Parliament.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Question agreed to.

Matthew Brown

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10.10 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will know that I applied for the Adjournment debate which, according to the Order Paper, concerns

"the future of Matthew Brown, following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission Inquiry."

The subject for tonight's debate is the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, yet it is noticeable that the Department of Trade and Industry has refused to send a Minister to the House to answer——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the choice of which Minister replies to the debate is not a matter for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Earlier I sought to place on record the fact that I am sorry that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has been sent to the House instead of a Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry. Although I have every respect for the Parliamentary Secretary, I do not think that she has been briefed in a way that will help us to debate the matter effectively.

I rise to raise a matter of deep concern to me, to my hon. Friends the Members for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and for Carlisle (Mr. Lewis), to the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean) and to nearly 200 hon. Members who have signed early-day motion 137. I refer to the current bid for the north-west based brewer Matthew Brown by Scottish and Newcastle breweries, which is one of the big six brewers in the United Kingdom. As anyone who has visited the north-west during the past few months will be aware, a huge groundswell of popular opinion against the proposed takeover has been building up. There have been marches through the streets of the north, letters by the hundred to local newspapers, petitions signed in pubs and on street corners, and all sorts of activity supporting the board and the employees of Matthew Brown in their fight against this unwelcome and unnecessary bid.

This takeover bid should not be taking place. We do not want it, and I appeal to all shareholders tonight both private and institutional, with all the powers I have at my disposal, not to sell their shares. Please do not sell to Scottish and Newcastle at any stage.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this affair has been the quite inexplicable response of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. In this instance, despite a strong reference by the Office of Fair Trading, the commission appointed has singularly failed in its duty to protect the public interest. The report's conclusions are a farce, a miscarriage of justice and a betrayal of its own so-called commitment to objectivity. The conduct of its investigation is riddled with irregularities, some of which demand the closest of inquiries by the Minister. No wonder the board of Matthew Brown found its recommendations staggering, especially since, as some hon. Members have now been informed, those people seem to have been the last to have been informed of them.

One must ask, whose unseen hand is to be discerned in the presentation of the report? Who is behind its conclusions? Was it the members of the Commission? Was it the Scottish Lobby of Members of Parliament? They are certainly not registered as having made a submission, and my inquiries show that they were not active. Was it the Scottish brewing lobby? We do not know, but we know that the Scottish Department of Industry recommended in favour. That is remarkable because in making its recommendation it was supporting the closure of breweries in Workington and Carlisle. Every utterance of Scottish and Newscastle should have told the Department that it should have been aware of the dangers. Heads should now roll. The Department had no right to support a case which involved the closure of plants in England. It has exceeded its responsibilities. It is not the task of a Conservative Department of Industry in Scotland to approve the closure of profitable industry in England. Its task is to support the further expansion of industry.

On every issue affecting the public interest, the Commission's findings were inconsistent with the evidence. The Commission acknowledged the inevitable reduction in competition as "undesirable" but regarded it as "insignificant". How many of the Commission bothered to go to Cumbria and Lancashire to see what statistical reduction in competition meant? Most of the national brewers choose not to trade there. The loss of choice, the closure of village pubs and the disappearance of the amenity in rural areas will be disastrous in every way.

The Campaign for Real Ale has repeatedly expressed anxiety about the effect on consumer choice, and with reason. Scottish and Newcastle's past record on acquisitions shows no commitment to the preservation of local beers. It seeks one result from the takeover only—more outlets from which to sell its products, and thereby to minimise surplus capacity in its existing plants. Yet it talks about

"some reduction in licensed outlets trading,"

and the fact that

"those trading would in general be improved and would operate to better standards."

It does not matter to Scottish and Newcastle that a tenant or manager should lose his livelihood, or that the customer must travel twice as far for a drink. The public interest is again the loser.

I mentioned surplus production capacity. At present Matthew Brown operates four breweries profitably in areas where unemployment is running well above the national average—in particular, in Workington and Carlisle. A job lost there is a catastrophe, and closures will condemn hundreds of people to a lifetime on the dole. Yet the report positively encourages Scottish and Newcastle to rationalise production, with its immediate redundancies, not to mention the knock-on effect on local contractors who rely on the local brewery for work. All that is supported by the Department of Industry in Scotland.

The Government profess to support small businesses. They even give grants to enable small firms to start. Why then can they not prevent this unnecessary take over, which is unanimously opposed by customers, tradesmen and employees alike, and seems destined to achieve nothing but gratuitous redundancies? Even at this late stage I call upon Scottish and Newcastle's board to stop misleading the public about the continuation of brewing production, and to give some categoric unertakings about current employment levels at all Matthew Brown's breweries. It has refused to do that to date.

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

In its submission to the commissioners, Scottish and Newcastle said:

"We have stated categorically, publicly and in writing, that without any question whatsoever the Blackburn and Masham breweries are sacrosanct for continued brewing purposes."

No such assurances have been given for Workington or Carlisle.

Mr. John Watson (Skipton and Ripon): The hon. Gentleman referred to the Masham brewery at Theakstons which, as he will be aware, is in my constituency. Is he interested in knowing that the pledge to maintain brewing facilities refers to only six jobs out of 50 and that well over 80 per cent. of the jobs at the Masam brewery remain uncovered by any pledge that might have been given by Scottish and Newcastle?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman only further confirms my view that that company has made many misleading statements. I was under the impression that that brewery was to be kept open. We now find that it is to be kept open with a substantially reduced work force.

The commission went on to say:

"the continued operating of all four breweries of Matthew Brown could prove uneconomic in the longer term and its programme of rationalisation could result in brewing being discontinued at Workington, Carlisle or both."

To add the final injustice to injury it concluded:

"In due course the Carlisle and Workington breweries would be closed by Matthew Brown even if the company remained independent."

That is nonsense. It is a lie. Matthew Brown has repeatedly given me assurances about the future of brewing in Workington. Its representatives have told me in writing and in conversation that that brewery is safe. I regard its future under Matthew Brown as as safe as the Bank of England, as I have said previously in the House.

Mr. David Maclean (Penrith and The Border): I agree with much of the hon. Gentleman's argument and share his anxiety and indignation that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission has come, in my opinion, to the wrong conclusion on the evidence. Does he not find it extraordinary that the commission says that there is no real risk to jobs and no evidence that the breweries will close while extolling Scottish and Newcastle's marvellous redundancy scheme?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman, as his hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Watson) did, further shows the misleading nature of Scottish and Newcastle's claims.

Matthew Brown is a well-run, profitable company with a proud history of over 150 years of brewing in the north-west. It is not a lame duck and nor does it need Scottish and Newcastle's help. It should not be sacrificed to fulfil Scottish and Newcastle's objectives of solving its internal commercial problems and consolidating its position in the national brewers' league table.

The two companies' philosophies are completely opposed. Matthew Brown is a regional company with a strong involvement in the local community, locally based management and short lines of communications. According to the submissions, Scottish and Newcastle is proud of its successful policies, as the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border said, in handling redundancies and closures. I can understand that. It has had its fair share of them as, indeed, it has had its fair share of industrial action. There has been a seven-week strike in Manchester which has only been settled during the past few days. I can only assume that Scottish and Newcastle's management is appalling. Its work force has been reduced by nearly 7,000, or 25 per cent., since 1980.

In contrast, Matthew Brown can be proud of its employment record—an increase of nearly 500 jobs, or 30 per cent., over the same period. Matthew Brown's industrial relations record shows only four days' work lost in the past 20 years and one 10-day work to rule in 1983. What a record. It must be unsurpassed in the British brewing industry.

In employment terms, the takeover will do nothing for Matthew Brown other than to turn back the clock five years. In every respect, in recent years Matthew Brown's performance is superior to that of Scottish and Newcastle's. I call upon the House to applaud Matthew Brown's profit performance—£7 million on a turnover of £44 million last year; to applaud its contribution to the prosperity and quality of life of the regions, in particular Blackburn, Workington and Carlisle; and to applaud the way in which it has served its employees, customers and shareholders well. The fate of Matthew Brown now lies with the shareholders.

I sincerely hope that institutions and individuals alike remember the part that management and employees of Matthew Brown have played in the successful growth of their investment in the past. They deserve better than to see their company go under the hammer to satisfy the desperate desire of a national giant to expand at all costs and resolve its own internal problems. Matthew Brown deserves better than to see the company broken up, with wide-scale redundancies. I emphasise that it deserves the right to continue to operate as a successful, regional, independent company.

The final two paragraphs of the conclusions of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission read:

"We discern no material advantages to the public interest arising from the proposed merger; but the question before us is whether the merger may be expected to operate against the public interest, and in our view there are not sufficient grounds for such an expectation.

We conclude that the merger situation which will be created if arrangements in contemplation by Scottish and Newcastle Breweries plc for the acquisition of Matthew Brown plc are carried into effect may be expected not to operate against the public interest."

What could be more against the public interest than a reduction in competition? What could be more against the public interest than a reduction in consumer choice, an increase in prices, a loss of employment and a rationalisation of amenities—all admitted tacitly in the export?

That brings me to an area of the whole affair which certainly needs further examination. Paragraph 7.27 of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report says:

"We accept that Matthew Brown has no present intention of closing these two breweries, but we believe that in the long run the closure of one or both of them might come to appear to Matthew Brown to be inescapable in the interest of greater efficiency and cost saving. We believe that, whether the merger takes place or not, the future of these breweries cannot be regarded as totally secure."

That is a remarkable statement. Indeed, the commission has no right to make it. It is not its role to propose the closure of highly profitable breweries, or to talk about something being

"inescapable in the interest of greater efficiency".

Who do the members of the Commission think they are? What are they trying to do—make recommendations to the management of a company? It is none of their business. They should have kept their noses out of our affairs. It is not their role to interfere in the management of Matthew Brown. They have exceeded their responsibilities and gone beyond their remit.

The Fair Trading Act 1973, in placing investigative powers in the hands of the commission, was never intended to be used in this way. It was never intended that the commission should sanction the closure of profitable enterprise. Why should the members of the commission have the right to overrule Parliament in such issues? one third of the members of this House signed the early-day motion, and if Conservative members had been free to sign it a majority of this Parliament would have signed it. It opposes the takeover. Should not the Government now repeal legislation that removes from Ministers the right to protect jobs in the public interest?

Why not amend the law to give the Secretary of State the power to consider Monopolies and Mergers Commission recommendations on takeover, but reserving to him the final right to decide for himself or herself, after parliamentary debate and/or consultation? Surely it is the government that must be accountable. It is the Government that we hold accountable in terms of job losses on this occasion.

Another solution would be to require that it be proved that a takeover is in the public interest as against the need to prove, as at present, that the matter is not in the public interest. On that benchmark, without doubt, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission would have refused approval in this case. It is quite unreasonable to leave it to a so-called independent committee of inquiry or commission to decide on such matters. The old proposals, which were also the subject of a committee of inquiry, will be coming before this House. The House will have a vote. We need legislation to control the reaction of creditors who are out to secure closure to resolve their own commercial problems.

Two weeks ago, the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry — the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard)—told us that the inquiry into the leak which took place on the Thursday would be dealt with internally within the Department. He would not give undertakings that the findings of that inquiry would be brought before the House. I, along with some of my hon. Friends, will start pressing the Minister in a few weeks for the conclusion of that inquiry. We believe that we are entitled to know what happened. We believe that, if we are not told, a cover-up must be going on. That would be against the interests of the House.

10.30 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Peggy Fenner): I am sorry if the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was expecting another Minister to respond. However, the Order Paper states that the hon. Gentleman

"proposes to raise the subject of the future of Matthew Brown, following"——

I stress the word "following". My Department has responsibilities for the brewing industry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Not "before."

Mrs. Fenner: The Order Paper states:

"following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission Inquiry."

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for providing this opportunity to debate the future of the company, not least because it has allowed us also to focus more generally on the future of the brewing industry in the light of the recent report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

I cannot accept the hon. Gentleman's allegations about the impartiality of the commission. It is an independent body. Its role is to evaluate the varying views put to it. The commission could only take the evidence and the views put to it by the parties. They made a categorical statement about the future of the brewery at Masham. They intend to continue to brew there and to market this traditional brand. It is not for me to defend the statements to the commission by either party. The report fairly sets out the evidence and arguments that were put to the commission. Although I respect the hon. Gentleman's right to take a different view and to reach different conclusions, I cannot accept that the commission did other than examine the facts objectively.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has announced a review in 1986 of competition legislation.

I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's concern for the future of Matthew Brown, a company acknowledged to be a highly successful regional brewer making a valuable contribution to the local economy and amenity in the hon. Member's constituency and, more generally, in the north of England. Much of the evidence that was before the commission argued for its continued existence as an independent brewery and for Government action to prevent its acquisition. I would not want to say anything which detracts in any way from the deserved tributes paid to the company. One must be clear, however, about the role of the Government in these matters.

In making its report, the commission is obliged by the Fair Trading Act 1973 to report if

"a merger situation qualifying for investigation has been created and the creation of that situation operates, or may be expected to operate against the public interest".

It is only if the commission so finds, and specifies the adverse effects that it foresees, that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is empowered by the Act to intervene. In this case, the commission's report makes it clear that, while the commission could discern no material advantages to the public interest arising from the proposed merger, there were not sufficient grounds for a conclusion that acquisition of Matthew Brown plc by Scottish and National Breweries plc might be expected to operate against the public interest.

Dependent on one's point of view, of course, it is possible to argue over the details and the balance of the evidence that the commission received. Naturally, both sides put forward claims and counter-claims, allegations and denials.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister answer a simple question? Is the loss of 170 jobs in the county of Cumbria in the public interest?

Mrs. Fenner: The commission's view was that the merger is not against the public interest. Furthermore, representations from different interests, unsurprisingly, took different views on the desirability or otherwise of a merger, reflecting, of course, differing perceptions about the effects of a merger. No purpose would be served by

[Mrs. Fenner]

our debating tonight the differing views expressed. The commission's task was not an easy one, but its report sets out very clearly the evidence it received, the conclusions it reached and its own careful reasoning. As was made clear in the statement on the report on 13 November, in the light of the commission's conclusion, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has no power under the Act to prevent the acquisition nor to attach any conditions should a renewed bid involving the two companies in their present form be successful.

I understand that, following the MMC report, Scottish and Newcastle has renewed its bid, which the board of Matthew Brown continues to find unacceptable. There being no grounds for Government intervention, the future of Matthew Brown lies in the hands of its shareholders.

I recognise, however, that the hon. Member for Workington is concerned that if the bid is successful the merged company may, as part of a rationalisation programme, decide to close the brewery in his constituency with the resultant loss of jobs. He is, perhaps understandably, not persuaded of the fact that the future of this brewery cannot be regarded as completely secure, even if, the merger does not occur. Nevertheless, that was the conclusion that was reached by the commission after careful study of all the evidence. I recognise that that conclusion offers little comfort.

The question of reduced competition in north and west Cumbria and in the north east in both the tied and free on-trade should the merger proceed, was one that concerned the hon. Members for Workington and for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) in their submissions to the MMC, which the commission studied very carefully. The commission's well-argued conclusion was that the merged company's increased share of business in the north west would not affect the ability of other brewers to continue to compete for the free trade business there. It noted that the merger would have little effect on competition as far as tied houses were concerned because Scottish and Newcastle currently owns relatively few public houses in the area. While accepting that in principle the elimination of Matthew Brown as a separate competitor in the north east was undesirable, the commission noted that the company's presence there was not yet a significant factor in competition and concluded that the likely effects of the merger on competition in the north east would not be detrimental to the public interest.

The hon. Member also expressed fears that Matthew Brown's smaller public houses—he mentioned village pubs—would be under threat of closure by the merged company, that there would be the loss of amenities in small communities in his constituency and that this would affect tourism, which is very important to Cumbria. This question was fully exposed and thoroughly aired in the commission's report——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: But it ignored it.

Mrs. Fenner: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman. It was fully exposed and thoroughly aired in the commission's report, but it did not see closures of pubs as being a material consequence of the merger.

In the short time remaining in this debate I should like to say a word about the wider issue which concerned many people with an interest in the future of our brewing industry. There has been considerable speculation that if this bid were allowed to proceed, it would signal to the major national brewers that the Government would take no action to restrain a flood of takeovers of the smaller regional brewers. While the Monopolies and Mergers Commission found no grounds for Government intervention in this case, it made clear its view that in the interests of healthy competition, and also in the general interests of the areas in which they operate, it is desirable that there should continue to be viable and vigorous regional brewers. It forewarned that there could well be a strong case on public interest grounds against acquisition of a regional brewer by any of the five largest national tied estate brewers. That message is clearly one to which the Government must pay full regard in considering whether any bids arising in the future should be referred to the commission.

The hon. Member for Workington raised another point at the end of his speech. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has announced, an investigation is under way to establish whether a leak occurred. However, it has not been the practice of this or previous Governments to publish reports on internal inquiries.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 29 November 1985

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Child Abuse

9.35 am

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I beg to move,

That this House notes with grave concern recent cases of child abuse, some of which have ended in the death of children; acknowledges the urgent need to bring about a significant reduction in the incidence of this social evil; recognises that social workers, doctors, health visitors, school-teachers, police officers and all the others concerned with child welfare must be given the means by which they can become more highly skilled in the prevention, detection and treatment of child abuse and neglect; and calls upon the Government to encourage and facilitate such developments as are needed.

I am moving the motion on the Order Paper rather than that in the Order Book, as it seems that the Clerks in the Table Office have introduced a new hon. Member—a Norman Gordon—but that motion is also mine.

Recent cases of child abuse have shocked and angered the nation. It can be seen in the response of the press and on television. That fine and eloquent journalist, Mr. Keith Waterhouse, voiced his anger in his column last Thursday. He wrote a catechism for a dead child. We can see the anger in his writing. He said:

"Question: What reasons did there seem to be for not returning 22-month-old Gemma Hartwell to her violent father?

Answer: There seemed to be no reasons on the information available at the time, which was simply that he had two previous convictions for child abuse.

Question: Not until which point was Gemma handed over?

Answer: Not until there had been a careful appreciation of the situation by social workers.

Question: What did the social workers not know?

Answer: They did not know what was going on."

The catechism continues:

"Question: What kind of guidelines will be issued?

Answer: New ones.

Question: To what end?

Answer: To prevent a recurrence of this tragedy.

Question: And to stop further children falling through what?

Answer: The net.

Question: What, following this unforeseeable death for which nobody is to blame, will be made?

Answer: Recommendations.

Question: And finally, who will be fired, demoted, disciplined or at least reprimanded?

Answer: Nobody."

That is powerful and angry journalism and performs a vital role in a democracy, but bashing social workers is also a form of abuse—journalistic abuse.

Parliament has a duty to examine this dreadful issue with an equal concern. We can best do that by following the example of the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), who, in her Adjournment debate on 26 July, said:

"None of us can fail to experience a strong emotional reaction to the recent cases of child abuse and death which have been so widely reported. There have been errors of judgment and it is essential that lessons be learnt from those. Rather than simply adding to the sensationalistic and censorious responses to these recent appalling tragedies, for which simplistic solutions are too often proposed and social workers are more often than not used as whipping boys, I should like to try to redress the balance and see the problem of child abuse in clearer context."—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1421.]

I want to follow that lead. I do so with some diffidence because I am much more at home with such esoteric subjects as shipbuilding, the offshore oil industry, industrial relations and, as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) knows, the fishing industry.

Other hon. Members have also expressed their deep distress and concern over this issue. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) has been prominent in seeking debates and legislation on both child and sexual abuse, and I am sure that he will catch your eye this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker; he could hardly fail to do so. On Monday, the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) spoke in an Adjournment debate on the important problems surrounding handicapped children and their families. In addition, I think that I am right in saying that my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) had hoped to raise the issue next week by means of a private Member's motion. Similarly, I believe that the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) intends to introduce a private Member's Bill to strengthen the position of children in care. Such a measure should receive all-party support, as every hon. Member must want to see a significant decline in the incidence of child abuse.

First, we should establish what we mean by child abuse. It has been suggested that the public perceive child abuse as being as it is portrayed by the press and television in cases such as the death of Jasmine Beckford. But it can also involve serious injury inflicted on a child, the deliberate physical maltreatment of a child, sexual abuse and chronic neglect due to the parents' or caretakers' apathy, inadequacy or ignorance.

It would also seem that there is no precise legal definition of child abuse, but the effects of child abuse are wide ranging. As we know, tragically some children die, and others suffer severely from brain damage, become mentally handicapped, or suffer from epilepsy or cerebral palsey. In 1974 Professor MacKeith calculated that there may be 400 children aged under one in the United Kingdom who suffer permanent brain injury as a result of violence inflicted on them.

Even those children who suffer no physical injury may well become emotionally demaged individuals due to some form of abuse. In some cases it comes to light in the classroom or playground through language difficulties or social isolation. The other day Professor Frederick Stone of the Yorkhill hospital, Glasgow, suggested to me that one significant child abuse case was diagnosed by paediatricians and other doctors every day in the United Kingdom.

For children, the most dangerous years appear to be between birth and five or six years of age, after which they are in a slightly better position to protect their interests, as they are then able to report physical or sexual abuse. I am not for a moment suggesting that children aged five or more are immune from physical, emotional or sexual abuse. That would be stupid. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children showed in a recent study that

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

"the number of children under 15 physically abused each year has increased from 4,699 in 1977 in England and Wales, to 6,388 in 1982. However, the fatal and seriously injured have declined in numbers from 822 in 1977 to 647 in 1982. The percentage of injured children aged 10 or over has increased from 16·4 per cent. in 1977 to 28·7 per cent. in 1982 with a corresponding decrease in the percentage of 0-4-year-olds".

Most physically injured children are still aged less than five. Incidentally, I am pleased that the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) is here. I believe that he is a member of the central executive of the NSPCC, which is a fine and honourable voluntary association.

We must, of course, treat the statistics on child abuse very cautiously. In a brief that I was given by the parliamentary officer for the British Association of Social Workers, it is stated:

"Family life is private, and so reliable data on the extent of violence against a child is hard to obtain."

The Select Committee that considered violence in the family in 1976 suggested that in England and Wales 3,000 children are severely injured each year and a further 40,000 are moderately or mildly injured. Indeed, 250 children will die from their injuries and 400 will become brain damaged or mentally retarded. But those are now thought to be conservative figures.

Mr. Norman Dunning, of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, informed me that he and his colleagues were convinced that there was vast under-reporting of the less serious sort of child abuse. He also told me that, in his opinion, it was a false notion that such cruel and heartless behaviour was peculiar to poor and deprived families. That view is supported by Professor Stone and Dr. David Pithers of the National Childrens Home. Professor Stone told me that social classes four and five featured predominantly in cases, and especially in those that led to criminal prosecutions, but that abuse and cruelty were not confined to a particular social milieu. But middle-class abusers are much more skilful about concealing abuse when confronted with it than a young and woefully immature unemployed couple.

It must be pointed out that the NSPCC study revealed that the parents of abused children were much more likely to be unemployed than other people. In 1982 almost two thirds of abused children's families were in receipt of supplementary benefit. Furthermore, more than 45 per cent. of male and 18 per cent. of female caretakers of abused children had a criminal record before the violence took place. A large percentage of those known offences involved violent crimes.

There are, of course, numerous causes of violence to chidren, including alcoholism, marital problems, immaturity, inadequacy, unemployment, poor housing and poverty. For many of those inflicting pain and abuse on young children there is a mingling of psychological, social and economic causes. One can feel only pity for a young girl who is already the mother of one or two children but who is still herself navigating a course through adolescence. The stress that she suffers may well be aggravated by living with an unsympathetic partner—not necessarily the biological father—and by living in poor and inadequate accommodation that is submerged in a bleak and large housing estate.

Some feminists believe that child abuse is a form of violence in which fathers and male partners predominate. In last month's *New Socialist*, Michelle Barratt and Rosalind Coward said:

"we see, too, some uncomfortable reminders of the more well known pattern of male brutality towards women. In one case the mother of two children, one blinded and brain damaged and the other killed by the father, was herself also regularly beaten but remained loyal to the man. It is a feature of male power in the relationship of marriage that such a level of brutality towards both women and children can be endured. Other cases reveal that a father or stepfather's jealousy of the child is a salient factor in the motivation of the cruelty."

Having outlined some of the elements of this social evil — and I apologise for the sparse mention of the scandalous crime of sexual abuse—I shall turn to the circumstances surrounding the prevention, detection and treatment of child abuse.

We are all deeply anxious to see a dramatic decline in the incidence of child abuse. The easiest way to occupy the headlines of both the tabloid and quality newspapers is to malign social workers. I am married to a conscientious and highly skilled senior hospital social worker, so I understand some of the problems. Theirs is a difficult and demanding job. Social workers deserve, at the least, a fair hearing by editors and others who know little or nothing about the immense problems that social workers are expected to solve but who are ever eager to criticise them when they make mistakes. Moralists in the pulpit in the editor's room and on the political platform should hesitate before attacking such a soft target.

I have no wish to defend the lazy, irresponsible or incompetent social worker. If such people make mistakes because of their neglect, they should be severely disciplined.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Is there not a danger of the community as a whole shifting the blame to social workers when it is the responsibility of each of us to ensure that no child goes to bed bullied, battered or bruised?

Dr. Godman: I cannot disagree. The extended families of children suffering abuse have a very important role and responsibility.

I have a great deal of sympathy for the poorly trained, poorly managed and inexperienced social worker attempting to deal with a heavy and varied case load. The British Association of Social Workers' brief, given to me on Wednesday, says:

"The basic social work training—a one year course for graduates and two years for people without any academic training —does not prepare a young worker to cope with the demands of violent and disturbed families. Because of their painful early histories abusing parents will lie to obscure what has happened. Abusive parents are often very resistant to help. They feel threatened by the visits of a social worker. They will test out the worker over a considerable period before they can risk any trust . . . Social workers are all working under great pressure. Even the most experienced ones can and do make mistakes under the strain, especially of the kind induced by child abuse cases which are often deeply disturbing to the staff involved in them. The greatest danger is that a risk in a particular case is not recognised or actually denied. If the risk is acknowledged the system will usually monitor it effectively."

I have some reservations about that last comment.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I am deeply interested in what the hon. Gentleman is saying and I agree with him. Will he comment on the fact that much of the publicity is about child abuse in England? The statistics for Scotland are

significantly better than they are for England. Perhaps the system in Scotland which involves a supervision requirement rather than a care order has something to do with that.

Dr. Godman: As a Yorkshire man happily long domiciled in Scotland, it is even easier to me to spell out the superiority of the Scottish system than it is for the hon. Lady, who is a native of Scotland. I shall deal later with the difference between the two systems.

First, I shall deal with the Government's responsibility and their response to recent cases. Following the death of Jasmine Beckford, the chief inspector of the DHSS social services inspectorate wrote to all social service departments about their responsibilities to children in their care. The missive states:

"Social workers who have day to day responsibility for such children should be provided with the necessary support, guidance, supervision and management. You may wish to consider in addition administrative procedures to ensure that effective mechanisms exist to arrange for the removal of a child if necessary."

In July, the Government published a consultative paper on child abuse inquiries.

In response to the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), said:

"The Government are determined to introduce by Christmas a new set of guidelines for the entire social work profession that will be based on the . . . points that I have mentioned. We hope that this will minimise further tragic cases of the sort that have so appalled the nation."—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1432.]

On the broad subject of guidelines, I commend to the House a document entitled "The Management of Child Abuse" published this week by the British Association of Social Workers. It contains a code of practice for social workers and their managers which outlines a series of duties which social workers should perform.

Stress is placed on the importance of qualifications—appropriate qualifications—of recognising the high level of anxiety generated by cases of child abuse and of making precise arrangements and ensuring that there are clear lines of responsibility. The importance of guiding and advising families is also emphasised, as is the need to respond immediately to a child abuse referral, to work closely with other professionals and to keep proper and sensible records. I hope that the Government and local authorities will study the document with care since, as a layman, I believe that it deserves close scrutiny.

I emphasise the point made by the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West, that no single professional group can hope to deal with the problem on its own. That is why I stress in my motion the need for all concerned,

"social workers, doctors, health visitors, school teachers to be given the means by which they can become more highly skilled"

in their important work.

The paediatrician needs the social worker, the health visitor and the school teacher just as much as they depend on him or her. If we accept the need for highly efficient interdisciplinary teams of professionals, we should acknowledge the need for interdisciplinary training programmes for such teams. Paediatricians should be trained by social workers and health visitors, and vice versa.

For example, it is vital that social workers and health visitors have some understanding of child growth and development. It was put to me by several members of the British Paediatric Association that this is crucial, since amongst social workers and health visitors there is a genuine lack of understanding of the growth and development of young children. This ignorance means that early and predictable clues and signals are missed. For example, social workers and health visitors know little or nothing about the size and weight of a three-year-old child. Other signs, such as language delay and neglect, often go together. Child growth and development are ideal subjects for both practical placement and post-qualification training. Similarly, general practitioners would benefit from vocational treatment in child development.

I was told recently by a social worker in Glasgow whom I know fairly well that she became concerned when one of the young boys in her charge began to show signs of failing to thrive. She took the wee laddie to his GP, who asked her what was the average weight for a boy of that age. The social worker said, "That is why I am here." The doctor telephoned the health visitor on the case, but she had no idea either. Eventually he telephoned a more experienced GP and was given the information. That might be an anecdote, but it reveals the ignorance to be found among professionals directly concerned with child abuse. I understand that the medical professions have made recommendations about the training of doctors at primary case and consultancy levels. Will the Minister comment on those recommendations?

I am a layman, but I do not believe that a social worker in a generic social work department can be an expert across the whole area of responsibility. Specialisation is impossible. There are no magical skills in that demanding occupation; experience is surely the best feature, especially if the novice has received some basic training and then works with a highly experienced colleague. Dealing with child abuse and neglect requires a long apprenticeship based upon sound and systematic training.

I wonder how many directors of social work or line managers have received thorough training in the treatment of child abuse. For that matter, I wonder how many have received thorough training in drug and alcohol abuse, in the treatment of those suffering from senile dementia or in the way to deal with offenders. I suspect that some of those at the top of the tree are also poorly trained.

I was told of a recent and tragic case of child abuse, where the basic grade social worker involved had had three years training in the treatment of child abuse. Her supervisor was an American specialist in mental health. Both were managed by a young man who was a line manager with sparse practical experience. How can we harshly criticise a young person in those circumstances? In-service training should be an integral element of the work and career structure of social workers. Should we not think about setting up children's units within social work departments?

Recent cases of child abuse have clearly shown, among other things, that there is a need for post-qualification training in child care. Social workers keen to specialise in that area should be subjected to rigorous selection and training, followed by the right sort of experience, or we simply perpetuate incompetence.

I received a letter yesterday from the assistant director of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, a Mr. R. C. Wright. That organisation has responsibility for the training of social workers in this country. Mr. Wright's letter does not reassure me greatly about training. He said:

[Dr. Godman]

"It is essential that qualified social workers are released for post qualifying studies in child care social work and especially in work involving the risk of non accidental injury and of sexual and other abuses.

In 1983 and 1984 the total number of social workers released by social services to undertake CCETSW validated post qualifying studies (PQS) programmes of all types was respectively 212 and 235, and this was the highest figure since such courses began in 1976. This constitutes less than 1 per cent. of all qualified social workers in post in the U.K. personal social services."

Mr. Wright claims that the total number trained is inadequate to meet demands to cover the whole range of client needs — children, the elderly, the socially and physically handicapped, the mentally ill and handicapped, offenders and so on. Mr. Wright said that his association has

"already stated its intention to extend to three years the minimum period of training leading to the new single qualifying award in social work (replacing the Certificate of Qualification in social work and the Certificate of Social Service) to be introduced with effect from 1990. To be effective this longer period of training will require better facilities for supervised practice learning in the services. It will also make possible a degree of specialist learning in, for example, work with children, which is at present impossible in generic social work courses of two years which have to meet the wide range of social work staffing needs in the personal social services."

All the professionals I have interviewed during the past 10 days have, without exception, emphasised the need for additional training. I am grateful to them for all their help, and for the assistance given to me by the parliamentary panel on personal social services.

Does the Minister's Department support the council's proposal that the basic training course be increased from two to three years? When will the Department respond to that new policy on qualifying training for social workers? What research is currently being sponsored by his Department into the assistance that could be given to social workers dealing with the problems of child abuse?

I have even more questions for the Minister—I might as well keep him busy. Are any new research programmes being planned in that area? Is the Minister assured that the training and professional developments of health and social service professionals are adequate to meet the most difficult and sensitive cases of child abuse and the needs, both emotional and physical, of such children and their families?

I know that both in Scotland and south of the border voluntary associations play an important role. The Minister is well aware that the voluntary child care associations are often the main providers of direct preventative services in communities where domestic violence is prevalent. Those services, which certainly save the lives of numerous children and protect many more from serious injury, are often the first to suffer when voluntary funds are reduced. Does the Minister agree that the Government should support those voluntary services by exempting child care charities from VAT? Has the Minister any plans to set up within his Department a central monitoring and evaluation unit to regulate the quality of services to children suffering abuse or at risk?

Time is against me, so I apologise for my failure to discuss the possible introduction of a system of family courts in England and Wales, and the importance of such a system to the effective review of child care law. As I said in response to a question from the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley), as a Yorkshire man living in Scotland I think that I am permitted to point out the important role of the children's panel and hearings in Scotland, as well as the valuable work of the reporter to the panel, in the treatment of child abuse. Indeed, the reporter himself can receive referrals. Although employed by the regional or island councils, only the Secretary of State for Scotland can hire or dismiss him. That is a powerful safeguard for both children and families.

The close working relationship between children's hearings and social work departments in Scotland means that we have a more effective system than the English juvenile courts system. Thus, parents and children have a crucial legal safeguard in children's hearings and in the role of the reporter, as introduced by social work legislation in 1968 and amended in the 1970s.

That is not to say that we do not have cases of child and sexual abuse in Scotland—it would be stupid to say that such cases do not occur—but there is general agreement that the close detailed attention given to any reported suspicions of child abuse provides children with a slightly stronger defence against abuse in Scotland than is the case in England.

I can recall cases about which my wife has telephoned me to say that she would not be home in the evening because of her attendance at children's panels. Such panels are held in the evening, often within three days — sometimes within 48 hours—of a referral, and then the case goes to the sheriff court and back to the children's panel. Those are first-class safeguards that I recommend to hon. Members who represent English constituencies.

There have been many gaps in and omissions from my remarks. For example, I have not even mentioned the important role of case conferences in this whole area. I have attempted, however vainly, to emphasise the training needs of social workers, health visitors, doctors and others.

More efficient training, a higher degree of specialisation and increased emphasis on the inter-disciplinary approach to child abuse will not abolish this social evil. There will always be psychopathic fathers and caretakers. But such measures, coupled with more resources, added to a greater awareness on the part of the community, particularly among the extended families of abusers, could enable a more competent and confident approach to be made to the social evil of child abuse.

10.12 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I wish at the outset to congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on his good fortune in winning first place in the ballot, on selecting a subject for discussion that is causing deep and widespread concern, and for opening our debate with such great insight, sensitivity and compassion and considerable knowledge.

One cannot pick up a newspaper, national or even local, these days without being aware that not only is violent crime of all kinds increasing but that it is getting nastier and ever more cruel. Child abuse is only one aspect of a spreading disease. One reads of attacks, often multiple attacks, against women and assaults of a kind that seek to defile and humiliate. Not even an 80-year-old is spared. This appalling state of affairs must cause us all the deepest concern.

Rape, which was a rare occurrence in my youth, certainly before the last war, has become commonplace.

Ordinary people, as hon. Members will testify, are not only bewildered by what is happening but are boiling over with rage because of the inadequate sentences passed by some—I hasten to add not by all—judges on criminals when they are caught.

We even have the spectacle of such people in the dock grinning and showing contempt for the whole procedure, and certainly not showing any remorse. My constituents—I guarantee that it is within the experience of every hon. Member—are boiling over with anger at the lack of any uniformity in sentences for this type of crime, often of the vilest nature. I am boiling over too, and I hope that the Minister will take that message, which I am sure will be supported by many hon. Members in this debate, to the Home Secretary.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I well understand the point that the right hon. Gentleman is making and share his view that sentences for crimes such as rape must be severe. However, does he not agree that in cases of child abuse the only real purpose of long sentences is punishment of the individual and reflecting society's disgust with that individual? The deterrent effect of such sentences in child abuse cases is negligible, and possibly nil, because the process of rational thought is rarely present in such cases.

Sir Bernard Braine: The process of rational thought is absent in a great many forms of crime, particularly those involving the infliction of suffering on other human beings. I appreciate the point that the hon. and learned Gentleman makes, but I do not agree with his conclusion. I shall return to that subject later. Indeed, I thought that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) spoke for us all when she expressed her horror last week at the drop in the severity of sentences for rape.

I appreciate that the relationship between what we say and do here and the courts is a delicate one, as it should be for reasons that I need not spell out. But in the end the voice of Parliament must be heeded not only by Ministers but by the judges. It is high time that the Lord Chief Justice laid down tough and strict guidelines for sentencing. I hope, therefore, that the message goes out from the House today that we and our constituents want him to act and to act quickly in this matter.

It is also high time for Parliament to take a closer look at the causal relationship between the rise in pornography, the increasing lack of responsibility among film makers and those responsible for television programmes, who put out a continuous stream of screen violence and brutishness, and the increasing volume of violence in society. There is no escape from what was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Does my right hon. Friend think that the churches have a role to play in continuing their campaign against the so-called permissive society and the slackening of moral constraints that have resulted in people being given less support by the bonds and discipline of family life? Does he also believe that in this debate we should place more emphasis on that aspect rather than on the need for more social workers and so on? In other words, we should concentrate on the need for more self-reliance and self-discipline within the family.

Sir Bernard Braine: I do not think that any of us would disagree with that. However, I would not wish my acceptance of that observation in any way to weaken what was said by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow about the necessity for social workers to receive more training. Ultimate responsibility does not rest with the judges any more than with any other section of society. Ultimate responsibility starts in this place with the framework of law that we enact. The high priests of permissiveness—we have had quite a few over the years that I have been a Member of this place—have for years thrown up their hands in horror at the slightest suggestion that there is a causal relationship. They have had their day. Like the rest of us, they should now be able to recognise the carnage and social wreckage that they have helped to encourage.

The motion is especially timely because, for most of us, the most revolting aspect of the increasingly dirty and pitiless scene that confronts us is child abuse. I shall not add to what the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow said about that. I see colleagues in their places on both sides of the House who have devoted themselves over the years to various campaigns aimed at protecting children. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Gentleman's analysis and especially with his remarks about the necessity for those engaged directly in the welfare and care of children to receive better training.

There have been mistakes by social welfare departments but I would be the last person to criticise the dedicated men and women who are involved in this area of society. I am aware of the work that is undertaken by welfare workers in my constituency.

I wish, however, to draw attention to one feature of the appalling problem we face that is causing considerable anxiety to local government and to those who are concerned directly with the care and welfare of children. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security that it is a feature the Home Office could take on board and act upon straight away. Children—and here we should add the frail elderly and the handicapped, for whom local authorities have responsibility—are often under the care or in the charge of individuals with criminal records as a result of ignorance on the part of the authorities employing them.

Last month, the Association of County Councils drew our attention to the fact that many who come within the categories of the elderly, the frail elderly, the handicapped, and children run the risk of being abused physically or financially by people with convictions for serious offences despite a Home Office review of current rules following the Colin Evans case. Admittedly, in accordance with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, those who want to work with children are not allowed to conceal convictions, and, to help the employers to check whether there has been any concealment, the police are allowed under the Home Office guidelines to reveal certain convictions.

The association tells us, however, that the Colin Evans case shows that the existing guidelines are inadequate in that they do not apply to volunteers or to those who switch jobs within the social services. As I understand it, the Home Office review proposes to extend the voluntary guidelines to allow local authorities to ask the police for details of convictions of all persons who are involved in child care. The House should take note that the association is on record as saying that it believes that the review has

[Sir Bernard Braine]

not gone far enough. For one thing it does not extend to voluntary organisations that work with children and it ignores the fact that there are many others apart from children who are vulnerable, such as the confused elderly or the mentally handicapped, who can be physically or financially abused by the unscrupulous.

I understand that the association welcomes generally, as we all do, the proposals to close some of the gaps in the provisions on child care. It is clear that the review will not deal with examples of the sort that the association has collected from various sources, examples of vulnerable adults and children being open to abuse by those with relevant convictions. This is a serious matter but it is one that the Government can do something about if they have the will.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the best way of dealing with the issue might be to introduce legislation, perhaps in the form of an amendment to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which would lay down clearly the responsibility of the police and other organisations to pass information to the social services, the probation service and other organisations that are responsible for dealing with vulnerable and dependent people, whether children or the elderly? Does he agree also that such legislation should enshrine the rights of individuals to ensure that information about them which is being passed is at the very least accurate? Does he accept that a statutory framework would avoid the pitfall of the awful web of circulars, which is part of the problem at present?

Sir Bernard Braine: Yes. I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. Lady, who anticipated what I was about to say. There is certainly a need for legislation. We need a statutory code of some sort. I shall not try to spell out here what it should contain. It is on this very point that the association has made its representations to the Home Office. When my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State intervenes, I hope that he will have something to say on that score.

It is interesting that the proposed rules will relate only to England and Wales. The association tells me that examples have been quoted to it where a person has taken up work in England after having been resident in Scotland. Apparently there is no arrangement for tracing convictions back to Scotland in such circumstances. Presumably the same arrangement applies to Northern Ireland. Clearly that gap must be closed. I accept that there must be a balance between the civil liberties of the offender and the purpose of the 1974 Act and the need to protect children. However, I believe that our constituents — I am sure that this applies to the overwhelming majority of hon. Members —would surely consider that the balance must be swung in favour of protecting the child. The House has always been jealous in the past of the safety of children. We protect children against uncaring, neglectful and cruel parents. We have a right to interfere in the so-called family circle when evidence is given that harm is being caused to the child, whether physical, mental or moral.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our protection of the child could be strengthened by making a simple change to the framework of law to enable social service departments to apply to the magistrates' courts for warrants for custodial care and the production of the child in question? Social workers often suspect that a child might be at risk but cannot act because the custodial parent does not produce the child, which means that they have no evidence to pass on to others. A simple change could be made to the present legislation in the interests of protecting the child.

Sir Bernard Braine: I entirely agree. A few years ago, there was a tragic case in the neighbouring constituency to mine in Essex. A social worker had paid a number of visits to a home where a child was known to be at risk. The other children appeared to be happy and well fed, but that particular child in danger was never produced for the social worker. Yet it was neglected and malnourished and in fact was dying in a filthy room at the very time the social worker was calling. An inquiry was held. I certainly will not blame or name anyone but it is manifest that present arrangements are totally unsatisfactory.

The Association of County Councils has given specific examples. It is not necessary to give names, although we need to know what happened. Its spokesman has said that the cases it had collected were probably just the "tip of the iceberg". About a week ago, *The Times* reported some of these cases which

> "included a man with convictions for sexual offences against children being employed in a local authority hostel and abusing children again, a teacher dismissed for sexual malpractices moving to a private school, a driver convicted of acts of gross indecency with mentally handicapped children, after which earlier convictions for similar offences were discovered, and people with convictions for sexual offences volunteering to work with children."

How will the Home Office respond to the association's plea? We wish to know. I hope, too, that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will say that although the Home Office cannot issue directions to judges and magistrates — we all know that — my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will draw the attention of the Lord Chief Justice to public anxiety about the disparity between sentences for these atrocious crimes against children, the elderly and women generally. The House is disgusted with what some of the courts have been doing. It is as though some judges do not live in the same world as the rest of us. I hope that my hon. Friend will convey that message to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary and that he, in turn, will convey it to the Lord Chief Justice who, I am certain, is well aware of these matters and will in his wisdom take appropriate action.

If the debate succeeds in injecting a greater sense of urgency into this distressing, disturbing and dangerous state of affairs, it will have served a useful purpose. But having regard to the growing toll of social misery which present trends reveal, it is particularly late in the day for effective action to be taken by those who have the power to take it.

10.32 am

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): The speeches that we have heard this morning show clearly that there is concern about these problems. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) loudly and clearly expressed on behalf of the majority of hon. Members the outrage at the way in which the courts apparently deal leniently with many cases. The statistics speak for themselves. There is a horrifying catalogue of disaster

after disaster. Between 1979 and 1984 child abuse increased by 70 per cent. According to last year's figures, more than 7,000 children are affected.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): That is the incidence of "reported" child abuse. The actual number of fatalities has been decreasing.

Mr. Hancock: The statistics go on to say that. That is a justifiable point. Nevertheless, the number of children involved in cases of abuse has increased by 70 per cent.

Mr. Bottomley: Reported cases.

Mr. Hancock: The most striking increases in abuse have occurred with respect to what the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children categorises as "moderate" physical abuse and sexual abuse.

I should like to refer to some of the cases that I have encountered in the past few years, the most recent of which occurred when I was with two young policemen in my constituency. I spent a Friday night with them. We were called just after midnight to what appeared to be a domestic incident. We arrived at the top floor of a tenement block. On entering the flat we saw one chap who was suffering from either withdrawal from drugs or a drug overdose and was semi-conscious. There were two women, both of whom had two young children. One child was well under a year old. There was no furniture, and the babies were sleeping in a blanket and a sleeping bag on a mattress on the floor. A three-year-old was wandering around and going out on to the balcony. When the police attemped to take action, the younger of the two women picked up her baby and said that if they attempted to arrest her and take her out of the property she would throw the baby over the balcony. That was a horrifying experience for those two young policemen. They managed with great tact and understanding to calm the situation.

The following day, I attempted to contact the social services department about the case, but had no success. On Monday I spoke to the social workers. They were well aware that the children were at risk. It would not take anyone more than five minutes to ascertain not only that the children were at risk but that they should not have been there. It took the efforts of the police, myself and other agencies to step in to get the children taken from that environment. The children were at risk from general neglect, although perhaps not physical abuse.

I should like to refer to another incident which involves not physical abuse but another type of abuse which is not often seen. It is difficult for anyone to come to grips with it. The matter was brought to my attention when, as a member of the social services committee in Hampshire, I was responsible for special cases involving children. There was the tragic case of an 11-year-old boy who had killed his mother—not because he had been physically abused but because he had been mentally abused. His mother got the boy and his brother up at 5 am and, for three or four hours before he went to school, she made him do school work. This happened every day without any let up. Eventually, the boy's capacity to absorb that abuse, which was not known outside the household, ended and he rebelled by stabbing his mother with a bread knife which was on the table. The boy has spent the past 12 years in various homes. He has not been able to come to terms with females. No one could have stepped in to avert that incident.

We need a better understanding of the problems that we all face. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) referred to the various types of abuse that occur and the incidents that go unchallenged. I have a letter from a life-sentence prisoner held in Kingston prison in Portsmouth. He admits in his first sentence that he murdered his wife and has been in prison since 1979. His two children have been in the custody of the courts since then. He has been given evidence that his daughter, who is in the care of a local authority nearly 250 miles away, is being sexually abused. Despite his repeated attempts to get the police or the social services department to intervene on his behalf, no action has been taken. Because he is so desperate, and because no one will listen to him, he is petitioning Parliament to take action. He can do nothing about the matter from his cell in Portsmouth.

The problem is not limited to the family.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that a complaint has been made to the local police that a child has been sexually abused while in the care of a local authority, and that no action has been taken? It is extraordinary if a complaint has been made to the police and no inquiry or investigation has been held. Could it simply be that a man who has been in prison for a long time is making a complaint without any real evidence to back it up?

Mr. Hancock: I shall quote from the letter. It states:

"I have made a formal complaint to the chief constable concerned and as of yet, some six weeks, have not received even a reply."

In other words, the man has endeavoured to have the matter investigated, and now, in desperation, has sought the help of the House in resolving the case.

In the course of only a week, one of my constituents, Mrs. Janet Hewitt, and her group, PACA — People Against Child Abuse — got 10,000 signatures on a petition to urge the House to take more positive steps against child abuse. The rage to which the right hon. Member for Castle Point referred is, indeed, boiling over. There is genuine public anxiety, and perhaps ignorance and a lack of understanding of the pressures on the arms of society that attempt to deal with the matter. From conversations with social workers, I know that they face impossible difficulties. They have case loads which would fill a Bench and a half. We place an impossible burden on them. Moreover, they lack facilities and colleagues. Some people may regard that as an excuse for what is happening, but no one is trying to make excuses. Insufficient resources are being made available to enable social services departments to react properly. The two young policemen in the incident to which I referred have probably never been trained in recognising child abuse. We need to consider their responsibility. Other hon. Members have already mentioned the position of the courts.

Child abuse takes many forms. I am horrified when I see how the local authority in my city commits a form of child abuse by condemning families with three children under the age of five to live on the fourteenth floor of a tower block with nowhere to play. The parents must try to cater for those children in that difficult environment. The deprivation of play is as much an abuse of a child as being physically harmed, and, in the long term, the harm can be as great. We fail to recognise or understand our obligation to provide that sort of facility.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention, not only to society's feeling of collective responsibility when a child is abused, but to the importance of collective responsibility for supporting families with young children, and particularly for providing play facilities and nurseries. Shortly, when I publish the national pattern of play and nursery provision, I hope that he will join me in condemning councils that turn their backs on the needs of children under five by failing to make proper collective play and nursery provision for them.

Mr. Hancock: I could not agree more, and I should welcome the opportunity to support the hon. Lady. I am sick to death of local authorities paying lip service to children and then not providing the necessary facilities.

Mrs. McCurley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hancock: No, I should like to develop my argument further before I give the hon. Lady a chance to intervene. I am sure that she will have ample opportunity to cover my points and many others.

It is undoubtedly true that local authority after local authority ignores its responsibilities to youngsters.

Ms. Harman: They are all Conservative local authorities.

Mr. Hancock: To be fair, I would not like to suggest that they are all Conservative-controlled local authorities. My experience leads me to believe that that is not the case. In most local authorities children are deprived of proper play facilities. I do not defend authorities which condemn families to live in high-rise blocks, and many authorities commit that crime against the family.

Social services departments also have a role to play, but many of them have wholly inadequate facilities to find out the size of the problem, let alone to manage the problem.

Mrs. McCurley: May I please make one comment to the hon. Gentleman? From my experience as a councillor, it is evident that child play facilities and all those additionals to family life are irrelevant. The type of families who have children who may need those facilities are not the families that seek them.

Mr. Hancock: I do not believe that for one minute. It is nonsense. That is not my experience, and I continue to be a member of a local authority. That is an arrogant attitude to adopt to the problem.

The real problem of the family is that we do not train people to be parents. It is the one area of life for which we do not educate youngsters at school. We do not teach them how to look after children. If parents on an estate do not push for play facilities for their children, it is because we have not taken the time and trouble that we should have taken to educate youngsters in the art of being a parent. If we did, we would have fewer problems than we have today. Perhaps the Minister and his colleagues in other Departments would consider making it compulsory for youngsters at school to study child care and child development. They will then see the benefits that can undoubtedly accrue from giving youngsters that experience.

Too often, an 18-year-old comes to my surgery and tells me that she has major problems with one child, another one on the way, no husband and no one to turn to. She is completely unable to cope. I have seen such mothers smack a young child because the child has cried. That is ludicrous. I have two children and they cry at times when they want or need something, but I do not bellyache, smack or harangue them. I well remember their early years of development when crying was part of growing up. One should not smack a child every time it cries, but, unfortunately, people do and those habits do not change because we have not tried to educate people out of them.

We must consider child abuse within the family. I am horrified at the statistics of sexual and physical abuse within the family. They paint a ghastly picture. Most of it is founded on jealousy. Often it occurs when a new father, stepfather, boyfriend or lover joins the household and resents the attention given to the child. It also occurs with a father who has children when a new woman comes on the scene and is denied attention because of them.

I have experienced the jealousy of youth. As we grow older—perhaps we cannot all admit to this—we are at times jealous of youth and what youth has. In some cases that jealousy is shown in physical abuse of youngsters. I have seen people turn their back on the activities of the young simply because they did not want to know. It is a form of jealousy. They were denied those opportunities themselves and see fit to deny them to others. We all have an enormous catalogue of experiences and nightmares.

The problems are related to several things. The swings in public opinion cause legal and professional opinions to change frequently, thus making it difficult to make consistent decisions and plans. The Department of Health and Social Security has produced some ill-considered policy directives that have been based on individual cases which received much publicity at the time. Thus social workers are constantly caught between conflicting legislation. The Children Act 1975 advocates taking the child out of the home. The Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 advocates keeping the child in the home while rehabilitating the parents. That is simply not a practical framework in which to work. It fails to get to grips with the problems. Too many children are left too long in families with known problems. My experience leads me to believe that it is safer to remove a child immediately rather than to delay. Yet, because of constricting legislation, that is sometimes not possible.

In many instances court proceedings are far too long. Many cases drag on indefinitely. The introduction of a family court could help—a simple one-court system where all child care and family matters could be dealt with more efficiently and more effectively in less time. The child's welfare is about time. In some instances that precious time between discovery and action is the critical period during which the child's life is literally hanging on a thread. We should react to that situation.

There is no doubt that staff quality should be better. Those hon. Members who have stressed that point have been told time and again that training and more training is vital. Sometimes cases are given to inexperienced people because of restrictions on resources. More post-qualifying training should be provided and there should be much more supervision of cases. Much speedier case conferences should be brought into being. I was heartened by the experience described by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow in Scotland where case conferences are sometimes held 48 or 24 hours after the recognition of a problem. All too often case conferences do not take place because the people needed to attend them are spread around so thinly.

There should be more co-ordination and communication between social workers, teachers, family doctors and health visitors. The general practitioner should be able to recognise such problems and often does, but takes little or no action. How many of the cases that we have read about in the past 12 months could or should have been recognised by the general practitioners who in many instances visited the people involved but most of whom took no action? They failed to do so because they found excuses for their own inability to cope with the problem.

We need from the Government and the House a clear directive to the courts that the perpetrators of serious crimes of child abuse need to be punished hard. We need from the House and Ministers positive action in the form of resources to help local authorities to deal with the children in their care and to do away with much of the deprivation that breeds child abuse.

The most sickening fact of all, the statistic that sticks in my gullet and, I imagine, in that of many other hon. Members, is the one that shows the relationship between child abuse in the family and the father's state of employment. In 1980 53 per cent. of the fathers of abused children were unemployed. In 1984 that figure had increased to 70 per cent. That alone should give the Government a real incentive to get the British people back to work. Perhaps next time we debate this subject that statistic will be much smaller.

10.53 am

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on tabling this motion and on the delightful, kind and serious way in which he put his case. I am certain that he has added to the national debate on the subject. Back-Bench time is so precious that we are delighted that this subject has been chosen at a time when the nation is so angry.

Children face two great dangers. The first is the danger from adults who have a sexual attraction to children and who want a sexual relationship with them. Sadly, children are often killed as a result of that. The second danger is one that we have explored even more fully today. Youngsters may be injured or killed within their family unit by a parent, step-parent, common-law partner or simply a parent's casual lover.

I should like to think that I am speaking on behalf of 2 million parents who have signed petitions in support of my child protection campaign which has run for many years and for the thousands of parents who have written to me, pledging their support, putting forward ideas and providing a steady trickle of information leading to arrests and convictions.

I speak also for the little children and babies whose cries for mummy have to remain unanswered and for the little ones who are meant to be unheard by barbaric adults who mask their cries with cotton wool in the mouth, by closing a dark drawer or by wedging a door closed with wood. I speak for them all, so that their cries of anguish will be heard and they will not have died in vain. Out of their lives will come many important lessons.

Let me deal first with the adults who are obsessed with the thought of sexual relationships with children. They are evil and dangerous and, sadly, vast sums are exchanged for child-adult pornography. The noose around my neck grew tighter after I named a former high-flying British diplomat on the Floor of the House. Hon. Members will understand that where big money is involved and as important names came into my possession so the threats began. First, I received threatening telephone calls followed by two burglaries at my London home. Then, more seriously, my name appeared on a multi-killer's hit list. So the threats went on.

Child pornography is evil for two reasons. First, children have to be procured to produce this disgusting material, be it a photograph or a video film, and, secondly, adults can be corrupted with this material into wanting and desiring the real thing. It cannot be right to allow to exist any organisations that interest themselves in adult sex with a child. It is alien to our way of life, our thinking and our family units. I still call for them to be proscribed in my Paedophilia (Protection of Children) Bill. We have smashed the organisation known as PIE, the Paedophile Information Exchange. In its bulletin sent out to members it named my Bill, which has had its First Reading, as the reason for winding up the organisation. Some of its members are now in prison. Others have escaped to Holland, but we shall have them. However, other organisations are springing up and it is important that we should crush those in the same way.

It is common knowledge in this honourable House that I have put our judges on trial. I know that it is a sensitive area and I know that we in Parliament have to be careful because we make the laws that the judges administer. If it were in my gift I would hang anybody who killed a child, but Parliament has decided otherwise and we must acquiesce. Recently letters have demanded fire for fire. Referring to the case of Heidi Koseda, they say that the man convicted should be made to eat wallpaper only and starve to death. Other letters said that the man who killed baby Charlene Salt should have nine ribs and one arm broken and be shut in a dark drawer and that Gemma Hartwell had a ball of cotton wool put in her mouth and a scarf put over her head so that she could not cry.

Those letters illustrate how passionate and angry the nation is. I shall develop that theme after the statement.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 5 (Friday sittings).*

Rutherglen (Explosion)

11 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I shall make a statement about an explosion and fire at a block of flats in Kingsbridge drive in the King's Park area of Glasgow earlier this morning. The blast, which took place shortly after 8 am, completely destroyed the flats and the remains of the building are still ablaze. A number of people, including a passer-by, have been taken to hospital. One adult and one child died and two adults and one child are still missing. Just before I entered the Chamber, I heard that one of those reported as missing is now confirmed dead.

A police major incident team and other emergency services are at the site. The cause of the explosion has not yet been determined. I am sure that the whole House will join me in expressing our sympathy to those involved in this tragedy.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I thank the Minister for his quick response to the request for a statement from my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), in whose constituency this terrible tragedy occurred. All Opposition Members join the Minister in expressing deep sympathy to the families of those who lost their lives. We are also deeply concerned for those who sustained injuries. We know from experience of tragic events in Glasgow that the police and emergency services will do everything possible to help. If the gas industry is involved, we know its deep commitment to safety and we are confident that it will do everything to establish whether gas caused the explosion. Much was learnt from the gas accident at Clarkston some years ago, and I am sure that the industry is deeply conscious of the need to ensure that everything is done to create conditions whereby such tragedies are eliminated so far as that is humanly possible.

Will the Minister assure the House that everything will be done to help the bereaved families and those who have lost their homes, and that the cause of the accident will be established as soon as possible and reported to my right hon. Friend and the House?

Mr. MacKay: I assure the hon. Gentleman that everything is being done by the emergency services, including the gas people, first, to try to find those missing and to bring the blaze under control and, secondly, to establish the cause of the blaze. All the authorities in Glasgow will do their best to ensure that those left without homes are properly housed before the day is out.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I thank the Minister sincerely for agreeing to make this statement. Obviously, this is a matter of great concern to me and to those whom I am privileged to represent in the House. I also thank my many colleagues from all parties who have come in to hear this important statement on the incident that occurred in my constituency. I am sure that I speak for all my constituents when I extend our deepest sympathy to those who were bereaved as a result of this unfortunate accident, and our best wishes to those who were injured. I trust that they will recover fully in time. It is our earnest hope and prayer that those missing will be found alive and well and capable of full recovery.

With my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Mr. Hogg), I take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to the emergency services. One of my children, who is in the area now, tells me that the emergency services in Rutherglen are doing a splendid job. I wish to put on record my thanks and those of my constituents to the police, the fire brigade and the other authorities involved. Will the Minister ensure that the fullest inquiry is conducted into the causes of this unfortunate accident? Will he further ensure that those causes are rectified at the earliest opportunity?

Again, I thank the Minister for making this statement and my colleagues on both sides of the House for being kind enough to join us in expressing our anxiety on this matter.

Mr. MacKay: I fully appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's anxiety for his constituents during the two hours since we both heard about the incident. I assure him again that the fullest investigation will be carried out. The police already have a major incident unit in place, and the results of any inquiries will be made known as quickly as possible.

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): As a Scottish Member, and out of my deep regard for the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), may I say how sad Conservative Members are for the families and neighbours of the victims of this dreadful accident at King's Park. I live very near the area, and anyone who does knows what a pleasant and happy area it is, and of the fine people that it contains. Like the Clarkston disaster several years ago, it will leave an indelible mark in the mind, but I hope that the comfort and assistance from the emergency services, which I am confident that the victims are receiving, and which they will receive from the city of Glasgow and town of Rutherglen, will help them to overcome their grief.

Mr. MacKay: I thank my hon. Friend for those words, which I know will be some comfort, as will all the words of hon. Members, to those affected by the accident.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): I associate myself and my colleagues with the expressions of sympathy for the relations of those who died and for those who have been injured. The terror that must be felt following such an unexpected explosion must be difficult for any of us to conceive and must, as the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) said, leave an indelible impression on the mind. Although the Minister has little information now, may I ask whether he is considering making a further statement next week when matters are clearer? Although he can say nothing now about the cause of the accident, one presumes that the building is supplied with gas, which must be the major consideration.

Mr. MacKay: Obviously, the question of a further statement will have to await events. As to the cause, I do not wish to prejudge the issue, but I have no doubt that there are gas mains in the area. I am not sure whether gas was supplied to that building, but the possibility that the explosion was caused by gas is being carefully investigated.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): At this stage, the House can do little more than to extend sincere sympathy to the bereaved and the injured, and I do so on behalf of

my right hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart) and myself. I spent my early years in Rutherglen and know the area extremely well. It is always a tragedy when such an incident occurs.

We do not yet know the cause of the incident, but all of us must be aware that gas is the most likely substance to cause such an explosion. Gas is extremely dangerous, and the House should do all that it can to tighten the safeguards on gas installations, if that was the cause of the explosion, to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.

Mr. MacKay: If gas is found to be the cause—as I say, there is no evidence to show that it was—any lessons will be taken on board by the gas authorities.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the emergency planning officers have been able to lend their valuable assistance in this regard? Does it not illustrate the important need for the practice of civil protection?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend can be assured that the emergency services in Glasgow are, unfortunately, well experienced in coping with such major incidents. The fact that a police major incident team is on site will no doubt give us all confidence that a proper investigation will be carried out.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I, too, live in Glasgow and I, too, am deeply saddened by the news. My right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) expressed his intention to speak in the debate that I initiated on child abuse. I am deeply sorry that he has had to speak in this way first. May we have an assurance that the Scottish Office will give every assistance to the local housing authorities in the task of rehousing those affected by the incident?

Mr. MacKay: As I said earlier, I am sure that the housing authorities will be working hard on this and I know that anything that we in the Scottish Office can do for any of the emergency services we shall be doing.

Child Abuse

Question again proposed.

Mr. Dickens: It would be less than courteous if I did not say before continuing my speech how very sorry I was to hear the contents of that statement. I join every right hon. and hon. Member who has expressed sympathy for those who have suffered in the blast.

Before the statement, I was talking about sentencing and what the nation expected of it, and about the letters saying that we should fight fire with fire. However, we are not a barbaric nation and we do not behave in such a way. On the other hand, we do not expect a man convicted after the brutal death of a little baby to receive a sentence of only six years imprisonment, and the mother of that baby, who could have saved it, to walk free on probation out of the back of the court.

Back in the 1960s, when I was training as a magistrate, I was instructed that sentences should be designed to punish, reform if possible, and deter, while at the same time protecting society. The public do not think that those principles were satisfied in these cases. Two years and four years for the death of a baby who received nine broken ribs and a broken arm, and who was shut in a drawer with resulting brain haemorrhage, will not do.

The Charlene Salt case is just one example of how the Director of Public Prosecutions' department makes gross errors, as do the judges. When the father, David Salt, was interviewed, he said that he had banged baby Charlene's head on the hard arm of a settee and possibly, he said, on the wall, because she would not stop crying. Brain haemorrhage was the result of that. That was murder in anybody's book. It was not manslaughter. Broken ribs and arms were the result not of wilful ill-treatment of a baby, but of grievous bodily harm. My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General has replied to me on this subject in a five-page letter, but I remain unconvinced, because Charlene was a little baby only a few weeks old.

The judge implied criticism of count one of cruelty, when he awarded the maximum sentence of two years, but it was open to him to direct a further indictment for murder. He already had a full and detailed summary of events, and, in my view and that of public opinion and editorial comment, the DDP and the judge between them let a barbaric child murderer off with six years when life imprisonment would have satisfied in the absence of capital punishment.

There is then the problem of parole committees. Alan Grant was recently convicted at Preston crown court of raping a 13-year-old girl for four hours while holding a pair of scissors to her throat. The three concurrent life sentences were most appropriate, but another judge had earlier blundered. Grant had previously been sentenced to only four years for raping a 13-year-old girl and a 15-year-old girl at knife point. Grant had served a term of imprisonment for indecently assaulting a five-year-old girl and then served imprisonment for indecently assaulting a seven-year-old girl. There was then yet another blunder. The lenient four-year sentence was cut in half by the wisdom of the local parole committee, with the result that Grant struck twice again within seven months of his release—hence the life sentences imposed later.

Last week, another local parole committee released the mother of the four-year-old girl Jasmine Beckford, after only six months of an 18-month sentence. Beverley

[Mr. Dickens]

Lorrington, the mother, could have saved her child, as the mother in the other case could have saved hers. The child died from injuries that included 20 broken ribs.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister knows my deep feelings and concern on this subject, and is the mother of twins. She has written me a four-page letter on the subject of child abuse, which I received a few days ago. It is full of common sense and determination, and I shall quote one of the paragraphs:

"We share the horror shown by everyone in the community over recent tragic cases where children have been seriously injured or killed at the hands of their parents. None of us can fail to be deeply affected by the terrible sufferings of the children involved in these cases: they make it all the more imperative that we do all we can to avoid any recurrence."

I have been looking into these matters, as I follow the subject closely, and many helpful initiatives are on the way. If they were not, I would not mind laying into my Government. I have done it before and it gets me into trouble. That does not matter — if I think that my Government are wrong, I have a go at them. However, this time, the situation looks more promising. With my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's support, many changes will take place in the next year.

The consultations on the review of child law end after Christmas. The review of the child abuse guidance consultation document is expected next month. The child abuse inquiries consultations end tomorrow. New guidance on the review of children in care is imminent. The DHSS social services inspectorate has in hand the inspection of the supervision of social workers, and a report is expected next month. The proposals for the improvement of education and training, on which great stress has been laid, is taking place in social work, involving the central council. The improvement of education and training in social work is important, and I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will deal with it later.

The DHSS is conducting urgent research into good child care practice, and I am pleased to hear that. Reports of public inquiries into previous cases of child abuse will be available.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman has listed a number of initiatives that are under way, but he failed to mention the investigation that the Lord Chancellor's Department is conducting into the possibility of establishing a family court, an important change on which there is now more or less univeral agreement. Should not this be dealt with at the same time that the substance of child law is being reviewed and changed following the review? Will not it be nonsense if there is a review of the substance of the law without any alteration of the procedures that cause so much delay, and which mean that cases involving children come before courts with no experience of dealing with such issues? Do not we need both the substance and procedures to be dealt with together? Would not that be more constructive than the reviews about which the hon. Gentleman has been talking?

Mr. Dickens: I am grateful for those helpful comments. Yes, I agree with you, but I do not believe that it is any more helpful——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I have not got involved in this at all.

Mr. Dickens: Then I say to the hon. Lady that they are no more important than all the other items that I listed. It would, however, be sensible to deal with them at the same time. Yes, I agree with you. It is a very good point and now that you have got it recorded in *Hansard* it will not be overlooked.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have not recorded anything on this matter in *Hansard*. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will observe the well known practice of the House and will refer to hon. Members in the third person.

Mr. Dickens: The hon. Lady has duly recorded it in *Hansard* and I am sure that now it will not go unnoticed. Parliament will do all in its power to assist the social services, the health authorities, the police, the probation service, the education authorities and the voluntary sector. I hope that Parliament will also support the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the National Children's Home. Without those agencies, the country would be the poorer. I hope that they flourish for many years to come.

Eventually we have to rely on the calibre of those who are recruited. If they use common sense and keep up to date with the lessons that have been learnt from earlier tragedies, they will be more useful. In the past I have been unkind to social services departments. The vast majority of social service workers are dedicated, hard working and caring. They work in a high-risk area. To educate myself, I went to their annual conference during this year's parliamentary recess, as did the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security. I was also pleased to see a number of right hon. and hon. Members sitting in the audience. Parliament, therefore, is trying to be more understanding.

However, the social services attract doubtful recruits and "odd bods". They are armed with degrees and diplomas in the humanities, and many of them spend too much time handing out political propaganda instead of doing the job that they are paid to do. I have been on the receiving end of some of it. I should like a few mothers with grown-up children and some of the younger grandmothers to be recruited into the social service departments. They have experience; they know the signs; they are very competent.

The social service worker in Oldham who was responsible for the supervision of Charlene Salt recognised the dangers and was very anxious about that case. When the conclusions of the inquiry are made known it may be found that because of the law relating to access the system failed that particular social worker and that the social worker did not fail baby Charlene. However, we shall have to await the outcome of the inquiry.

Over the years, Parliament has delivered a host of severe powers relating to custodial sentences. It is now up to the Director of Public Prosecutions to bring the correct charges, to the judges to pass the correct sentences and to the parole committees to reach sensible decisions.

I make a plea to every judge in the United Kingdom. Judges have had powers conferred upon them by this honourable House. They have the power to punish, reform, deter and protect. I ask them not to reflect too deeply on the medical, psychiatric, probation and social reports when they pass sentence on those who have been

convicted. I ask them to reflect on the innocent babies and children who have been injured or killed, whose cries were unanswered. I ask them to reflect on the victims of rape and sexual assault who must carry that cross for the rest of their lives. Only then will they begin to reflect the outrage and anger that is felt throughout the United Kingdom. Only then will children be protected by our legal system.

11.24 am

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I join those hon. Members who have already congratulated the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on his success in the ballot, and on choosing this subject for debate. When one sets his cool, measured and rational analysis alongside the excellent speech in this House on 26 July 1985 of the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), one recognises that in this House there is not just concern but expertise—concern and expertise that are free from the grinding of political axes. During this debate I hope that as far as possible we shall avoid those subjects that raise political issues between political parties.

I am afraid that it is a fact that in the past speeches such as those of the hon. Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow and for Surrey, South-West to which I have just referred have not attracted the attention of the more voyeuristic sections of the press. Some of this morning's contributions will attract that kind of attention. I regard them as unhelpful to the motion on the Order Paper and to the subject that is under debate. I do not propose to dwell upon such issues as sentencing because they are peripheral to the subject under debate.

The experience of the Hospital for Sick Children in Edinburgh shows that, if one takes a measured look at child abuse, one discovers that there has been a large increase in the number of referrals by parents who are abusing their children. That has to be regarded as a great success. If parents are frightened out of self-referral, we shall have taken many steps backward in trying to deal with this important problem. When hon. Members make their judgment about child abuse we should bear in the forefront of our minds what I believe to be a truism: that any society gets the parents that it deserves.

There has just been a detailed inquiry into the Jasmine Beckford case. The report of the committee of inquiry is to be published next Tuesday. I believe and very much hope that the committee's report will make a significant contribution to the understanding of the reasons for child abuse and — even more important — to the need for change in our approach to child abuse; in terms of training, the steps to be taken, and the institutions to be used in taking those steps, in our attempt to solve the problem of child abuse.

Many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak in this debate, so I do not propose to range over all the points that I would wish to make in a debate of this kind. I propose simply to take four specific issues, all of which were raised during the evidence in the Beckford inquiry. I hope that when the Beckford report is published next Tuesday it will deal with them.

The first issue that I wish to raise has already been mentioned. It concerns the training of those social workers who deal with cases of suspected child abuse. I agree with the sentiment that has already been expressed in this debate: that we should not indulge in social worker bashing. We must assist social workers to achieve the aim that I hope is common to all—the avoidance of child abuse.

A social worker involved with child abuse has an incredibly complex and difficult job. A balance has to be struck between the child's bond with its natural parents, and evidence that suggests it should be removed from its home. Such a job cannot be done satisfactorily on the basis of general social work training. Three years ago, the Department of Health and Social Security published a document entitled, "Child Abuse: A Study of Inquiry Reports 1973-1981." Paragraph 4 of the summary says:

> "Workers who might encounter child abuse must have special knowledge, skill and experience to be able to recognise when it is taking place or is likely to take place. A major characteristic of many cases is the failure to bring together all available information and to use it in a structured, objective way by carrying out full psycho-social and medical assessments. These require continuous re-examination and revision. The need for health monitoring is important, particularly in cases of neglect. A common cause of inappropriate or inadequate intervention is the lack of a clearly formulated plan of action. Decisions should always be explicit and objectives specified . . . Several factors such as training, supervision and staffing influence professional practice in individual cases or affect the general level and quality of services . . . Cases can involve workers who are unqualified, untrained or inexperienced, sometimes all three."

The final part of the summary reads especially clearly. It says:

> "There is a need for special training on child abuse matters and especially for in-service multi-professional courses."

We must act on those recommendations and observations, especially as they were based on close examination of no fewer than 18 major inquiries into cases of serious child abuse.

There are many examples of how proper professional training in child care, beyond general social work training, could assist. One of the issues discussed at the Beckford inquiry was the extent to which social workers sometimes focus attention on the parents, who are often plausible and even persuasive, rather than the child. That misfocus is susceptible to training. Social workers dealing with children can be taught how to use other disciplines such as those of general practitioners, health visitors and school teachers. Equally, those other disciplines can be taught how to use social workers.

Training in the judgment of parental behaviour is required, but always from the overriding standpoint of the child's interests. If there had been such training in regard to the Beckford case, that part of the controversy might have been avoided.

Mr. Ryman: I quite agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman, but is not the problem much more widespread? Does he agree that there are many GPs, and even hospital consultants, who focus attention on the parents rather than the child? Although they suspect child abuse, though they have no evidence of it, they are reluctant or sometimes refuse to refer the case to the authorities because of an understandable but misguided sense that they will harm the parents.

Mr. Carlile: I agree. I shall return to that.

The Seebohm concept of the generalist does not meet the requirement that social workers should be trained in matters such as child development. I was brought up with my father's general medical practice in a poor industrial town in Lancashire. I remember very well the role played by the children's officer, as she was called in those days. She knew what was going on in the town and was a

[Mr. Carlile]

specialist too. It was much easier for a GP such as my father to have regular contact with somebody whom he knew had the expertise to judge, and to help him judge, cases. We should revert to such specialism.

I should like to consider, too, the system for dealing with cases. I am afraid that social workers are heavily overloaded and there is virtually no system for dealing with cases in many parts of the country. In 14 of the 18 inquiries considered in the DHSS report that I have mentioned, the inexperience of social workers was noted. The problems were seen to be compounded when inexperienced social workers had to carry heavy case loads. Ten of the 18 reports mentioned big work loads leading to what was called a "siege mentality" which lowered morale and induced a tendency to gloss over problems.

The child Malcolm Page was visited by his social worker at least once a week during 1978 and was considered to be making reasonable progress when the last visit was made on 29 January 1979. One week later he died in hospital, aged 13 months, from severe neglect in the provision of adequate food, clothing, warmth and cleanliness. He had gangrene in five toes, urine burns on his face and was seriously under weight. The social worker was dealing with 54 cases at the time, 10 of which involved child abuse, and had no specific training in child abuse.

We must harness the work of specialist social workers and properly trained nurses, midwives, junior hospital doctors — and senior obstetricians, gynaecologists or paediatricians—health visitors, who already have special training in child development, and GPs. The inquiries in the DHSS report highlighted the times when a proper case conference could have had a significant impact on a child's future. One of the issues raised in evidence to the Beckford inquiry was the poor attendance at case conferences. There was reference to only four people from a much larger team attending. That is not good enough. We must establish a system that ensures that all of the disciplines concerned have appropriate training and use it in a satisfactory referential system. There is a clear need for strong and clear policy for action in such cases and it must be established that responsibility extends from the time that the mother becomes pregnant right through childhood.

This brings me to an important and related point. Anybody who has had children or whose wife has had children, and who has had contact with ante-natal clinics, knows that the attention given to the character of the parents is sketchy. I am sure that there are honourable exceptions, but by and large the attention given is sketchy. Many paediatricians are very much aware of that now, and are working to do something about it. But nurses, midwives, junior hospital doctors and consultants in antenatal clinics have a special responsibility to identify cases where they suspect that there may be some possibility of child abuse.

On 26 July 1985 the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), spoke of potential changes in child care law. He said, I thought with considerable understatement, that such changes had been a long time coming. They have taken decades to come. Indeed, I very much agree with what the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) said from the Labour Front Bench. There is a need to look not just at child care law, but at the court procedures and the types of court that deal with children. As she said, there has for years been a consensus that family courts are needed. There has not been a consensus as to precisely what type, but let the Government provide a family court structure and we can sort out the details within that context. Until the House has legislation before it that provides for family courts, we shall not concentrate our minds on precisely what they should deal with. When we have that legislation, I suspect that we shall make a great improvement on the present situation.

A helpful report was published, on 4 October, dealing with child care law. To an extent, it is disappointing, because it dealt with half of the problem. It dealt with the DHSS side of the problem, but not with the court and procedural side of it; half an inquiry is a very incomplete inquiry indeed. Partly because of my professional experience and observation of court procedure, I believe that family courts are necessary. Although there are many excellent magistrates dealing with care proceedings, many others are insufficiently trained, inexperienced and insufficiently advised to deal with a lot of the cases. Without unduly criticising the lay magistracy, which does an excellent job, I believe that magistrates can sometimes be bemused by the adversarial atmosphere of care proceedings and by the inquiry into the credibility of witnesses, which often overshadows the real question of the child's welfare.

I shall be disappointed if the Beckford report does not consider the role of the magistrates' court in what happened during the months before Jasmine Beckford's death. I hope that there will be a valuable contribution towards the debate about whether the magistrates' court is the right place for such proceedings or whether we should have a system of family courts in which the platform of child proceedings can be unified.

There is, of course, considerable experience of child proceedings in other courts. The High Court deals with wardship proceedings, and county court judges deal on a day-by-day basis with custody and access proceedings. Indeed, a considerable body of expertise has grown up there. But it is time for all that expertise — from the magistrates to the High Court — to be harnessed into a single system.

Perhaps the Minister will consider the fact that I have been told by those who practise day by day in the county courts, in particular, that allegations of sexual abuse are increasingly being made in custody and access proceedings. The county court practitioners find that, because of the evidential rules of procedure in the county court, it is extremely difficult to obtain evidence as to whether those allegations are justified. An examination should be made into ways in which such matters can be properly ventilated and adjudicated upon in custody proceedings.

Finally, I shall concentrate briefly on inquiries into specific cases of child abuse. From events of recent years we know that where child abuse has occurred, not only public opinion but, far more importantly, our need to understand the reasons for child abuse and to decide what should be done have led to inquiries being set up. It does not matter much whether they are set up by the Government or by local authorities. However, it has become increasingly difficult for them to be conducted before judicial proceedings have been completed.

If there is a murder or manslaughter charge and a trial that involves a lot of expert evidence, there is often a considerable delay before that trial takes place. But the inquiry cannot realistically begin until the trial is over. Experiments and pilot schemes are now being undertaken to try to reduce the time between committal for trial and trial. Will the Minister investigate whether cases of child abuse are a particular area in which the tightest time limits should be set, not just between committal proceedings and trial but between arrest and trial? I am sure that he will agree that almost invariably such trials involve what has happened within a very restricted environment — the home. Outsiders may sometimes be involved, but their involvement rarely extends beyond the immediate friends of the family, babysitters or social workers who may have become concerned.

There is no excuse for any delay in police inquiries, or between committal and trial. The type of public inquiry that occurred in the Beckford case represents a vital contribution to our understanding of the problem. Such inquiries must take place as soon as possible after death or serious injury. Steps are available to ensure that that happens, and I urge the Minister to encourage his colleagues to take them.

11.47 am

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Mention has been made of one of the problems found in the juvenile courts because of the adversarial nature of the proceedings. But sometimes the same criticism could be made of this Chamber. I would like to endorse many of the points made by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). In the motion, the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow draws attention not only to the role of social workers but, importantly, to the role of other groups—for example, health visitors who have a particular acceptability with families. They are welcome at an early and crucial stage in a family's formation and when children are very young.

One of the tragedies highlighted by recent cases is that requently the child has not been seen and, moreover, has not been seen without its clothes on. A health visitor is peculiarly able to ask the parent to undress the child and to give advice in an acceptable way to families. Thus, I support their work.

Mention has also been made of the work of the police. I greatly admire the role performed by police officers in child abuse cases. They have an ability to deal firmly and plainly with families, and in my experience it is rare for a family to complain about how the police have handled a case. Their communication skills and ability to put things over without jargon is invariably helpful. The police are often the first to make families recognise how serious a problem has become.

Teachers are not the happiest people in the community at present. Frequently they point out that the public regard them as a repository for all information and advice. In child abuse cases, their contribution is significant. They see the children every day. They see them doing PE and notice whether a child is late. They are not always aware of what they should be looking for—the indicators that child abuse may be occurring. Teacher training colleges could do more to highlight the teachers' role. In a school day, there are many signals that all is not well with a child.

Teachers also have an important role in preparing young people for the responsibilities of parenthood. As many have said, one of the few jobs for which one needs no training or experience is that of parent. Teachers often comment on how wide the public's expectation of them has become. Some understanding of child care and development should be part of the curriculum. Tragically in child abuse cases, the parents involved often have a patheticaly unrealistic understanding and expectation of the appropriate behaviour for children of various ages.

I agree that a preoccupation with punishment is irrelevant and peripheral in child abuse cases. My hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) drew attention to the public abhorrence and repugnance of child abuse cases—I congratulate him on that—but it is important to accept that deterrence is scarcely a relevant factor in punishment. Moreover, that punishment can be counterproductive. Edinburgh hospital has been mentioned.

My experience suggests that one of the problems about reporting child abuse cases is the fear that the perpetrator will be imprisoned. Sexual abuse cases are almost always within the family. There was a ghastly example recently of a case outside the family but such cases are so rare that they are of less signficance. An increasing number of child sex abuse cases within the family are coming to light. The fear expressed by both the mother and the child is that the father will be sent to prison if the abuse is reported. The father might even use this as a threat to the child.

Pioneering work in bringing in the law — no one denies that that is important — and collaborating on treatment for the family has been done in America.

It is easy to become over-emotional and to get the problem out of perspective. Reference has been made to the cries of children which go unheard. Many more children's cries went unheard in Victorian times. We must see things as they were. Children were, for example, sent off to babyfarms virtually to starve. The whole idea of children having rights and needs of their own is a new concept. Of course, every tragedy should be investigated, and I welcome the Department's guidelines for inquiries so that a common standard is applied.

It is important for social workers to move on in their profesional life. They cannot solve every problem and every ailment in society. When they try to become community agitators and befrienders, they devalue their professional currency. They need to stand up for what they can do. They need proper training. They should ensure good practice. No one should condone bad practice, but we do not want social work by political interference. In many recent cases, local councillors have taken direct case responsibility upon themselves. That is like asking a member of the district health authority to stand in an operating theatre when a difficult operation is taking place. Politicians are politically responsible and their job is to facilitate the work, but they do not have the professional judgment to deal with child abuse cases. It would be a retrograde move if politicians tried to take on that role.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Does my hon. Friend agree that elected councillors are becoming far too involved in the day-to-day running of social services departments? Does she agree that if they left the experts to implement policies, we should not have the problems

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

uncovered during the Leeway inquiry in Lewisham as a result of there being far too little action too late because of political interference over the years?

Mrs. Bottomley: I agree. In some areas, a naive view of racism is taken so that, whenever a black child is removed, a social worker is called to account and to explain. That is unhelpful. Social workers should not be social engineers.

Training is crucial. Surrey university, on the border of my constituency, is considering closing its social work course. That would be a retrograde step. Universities are worried that their social work courses might be driven away. I hope that that possibility will be urgently explored. A proper research basis is essential for social workers.

We have talked today about many aspects of training and the need for a fundamental understanding of child growth and development, and of emotional development. Direct experience in a paediatric department has also been discussed along with the ability to communicate with children. We are talking about people with responsibility for people's lives. Therefore, training is paramount.

We could do more about management. Too often inquiries reveal a shortfall in management. It is important to know at what level decisions should be made and exactly what the procedures are. I hope that the DHSS guidelines to be issued later this year will cover this aspect.

I support the provision of family centres. Many hon. Members have talked about contributions by voluntary organisations. I hope that no one will confuse voluntary organisations with volunteers. There is, in my opinion, no role in such cases for volunteers.

One of the excellent contributions that the Church of England Children's Society and others have made is the development of family centres which provide a place to go. Traditionally, social workers have seen their work in terms of a relationship. That is not always enough. Families need a place where they can be offered advice, help and training. At a family centre they can be observed and monitored. I pay tribute to the Surrey social services department for many of the exciting and innovative ways in which it is developing projects and initiatives.

There are many tensions in society. There is the question whether parents have rights or whether children have rights. The pendulum has gone a little too far. We are preoccupied with bonding and the parents' need for their children. We should think more about psychological parenting, and about a child's right not to be abused, but to grow up free from the torment and terror of abusing parents.

There is a lot of tension around confidentiality. Many of us feel strongly about the openness of information and access to files. Many hon. Members have spoken on the subject. It is difficult to record professional concern about how a child is being treated. It is too often forgotten that a professional person's doubts about a case can be difficult to communicate. He does not want to damage the family, but he must put something on record. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) spoke about the civil liberties implication of disclosing people's criminal records. Many of us feel that the balance needs to be redressed in the case of those responsible for children, either as parents or caretakers.

I widely endorse hon. Members' remarks about the reform needed in the courts system. The child care law review is a good simplification, but it needs developing. The concepts of respite and shared care are helpful. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) can do more on that important subject.

We must move towards a family court system. The rules of evidence under our present court arrangements are unsatisfactory, as is the standing of parents. We have talked about it for too long. I do not want to follow the Scottish system of children's juvenile hearings, although I know that that system has some advantages over our system. We must operate on a number of fronts so that the children may be free of the terror and damage being inflicted on them.

Once more I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow on taking a balanced and appropriate attitude to the subject. Neither sentimentality nor populism will solve the problem. We must work at it in a professional, responsible and, above all, urgent fashion.

12.1 pm

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): It is a great pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), whose speech provided an excellent, comprehensive and thoughtful agenda for the future. I could not disagree with any of the points that she made, although I should like to discuss some of them further—for example, the current Scottish system and the system that the hon. Lady would like for England.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) for introducing this important subject for debate. Before coming to my main comments, I must say that as a Member of Parliament representing a Brent constituency, and with the report of the inquiry into the Jasmine Beckford case due next week, I regret that it is not possible to read the report, think about it, discuss it and reach views and conclusions about the way in which the Government, my local authority and other local authorities should act in the light of that report. Therefore, of necessity, my remarks will be general and not lengthy. I hope that other people, both here and in my borough, will wait for the report and consider it.

It is in that spirit that I must say how saddened I was —and that is a mild expression—to hear that there will be three separate party political press conferences in my borough next week on the publication of the report. Quite apart from the fact that there should be no press conferences until the report has been studied and responded to in the appropriate fashion — that is, in committee—I cannot for the life of me understand why a report of that nature should give rise to three separate press conferences by councillors. I am not picking on any particular party—the whole concept of what is proposed disturbs me greatly.

Another matter reported to me within the past couple of days also concerns me. I want to explain it as fairly and considerately as possible. I regret that, because of certain fears of members of NALGO working in the Brent social services department about possible decisions by councillors on their jobs, they have issued a statement directed at the council saying that any disciplinary action taken as a result of the Jasmine Beckford report could lead to industrial action. I do not want to be involved in any possible dispute. My concern is that such action, and the

press conferences to which I have referred, should be taken against the background of the Jasmine Beckford case. That appals me. I hope that everyone in my borough, no matter which side they take, will cool down, reflect a little more, study the report when it is published and concern himself more with the substance of the matter than with how we should behave either prior to the report or when it is published next week.

My first general observation on the subject before us is that Parliament has a difficult task, and that fact has been highlighted by the different natures of the speeches made this morning. Hon. Members must follow a careful and delicate line. Naturally, we all feel and reflect the passion and anger of our constituents about such cases as that of Jasmine Beckford. Many other cases have been mentioned in the debate, but we must remember that they form a minority of the cases dealt with. Our main concern, as people who lead on policy and action—whether in this place, the town halls, the institutions or the professional bodies—must be to encourage thought and reflection rather than, however unconsciously, undue over-reaction and anger. We must think about the things that need to be done.

We must avoid generalised attacks on social workers, the police and the courts—just as we do not want generalised attacks on our institution, although plenty of them are made. We must look not only at the responsibilities of the social services departments, the police and others, but at our responsibility as a Parliament and a Government. It is our job to encourage understanding. We must ensure that the best practice—and there is some good practice—is adopted throughout the country.

It is our job as parliamentarians, especially Ministers, to ensure that the necessary resources—as well as the policy and administrative guidelines—are provided for more training, in-service training and, where necessary, the reorganisation and expansion of social service departments and related services.

It is the job of Members of Parliament, and especially Ministers, to ensure that much greater specialist attention is given to child care. I make that point in support of similar points already made by hon. Members this morning. It is our job to ensure that the resources and facilities are available to encourage the greater provision of playgroups, day nurseries, nursery school classes and more appropriate family housing.

Reference has been made to high-rise housing. Much that is going on today in the housing sector, apart from high-rise housing, will result in child neglect and abuse continuing. With families living in 14 and 15 storey blocks, and with local authorities not having suitable houses with gardens at ground floor level into which those families should be moved, eventually something will break and there will be cases of neglect and abuse, and those cases will be hidden or reported in the courts, to the press or to the town halls.

Hon. Members who represent inner city areas where high density housing exists—not only high-rise flats but inadequately converted private accommodation—will be well aware of the accommodation that is going into decline and of families who, even today, are living in attic rooms without access to gardens and space for the children to play and without proper facilities in their homes. We and the Government know that those conditions exist and that action could be taken to rectify the problem.

In my constituency alone, there are hundreds of houses in the pipeline waiting to be modernised and converted into decent family accommodation, yet nobody knows when that work will be done. The property is owned by the local authority or housing associations whose budgets have been cut severely, some by 50 per cent., in recent years. Those properties awaiting modernisation represent families with young children living in inadequate accommodation.

From the people we see in our surgeries, from our correspondence and from the visits we pay to constituents, we know that there is stress and pressure and that eventually something will break and there will be problems. I agree that even at our surgeries parents slap their children as they are waiting. That happens because people are under stress. That is no excuse for their conduct, but we must try to understand the physical pressures that cause people to break and turn on children as well as on each other.

We in office have a responsibility to make sure that resources are available for the provision of nurseries and nursery schools, housing and other amenities so that people can move with their children out of high-rise blocks of flats into accommodation where they can live in a way in which they are entitled to live.

The hon. Member for Surrey, South-West spoke of the need to encourage family centres. More resources should be put into joint projects between health authorities and local authorities with social service responsibilities so that family centres may be provided in the right places jointly, not run on a departmental line. That would result in all the relevant departments being concerned for child and other aspects of family care. They would then be working together at the grass roots, not through a series of reports prepared in the town hall or in Whitehall. We need the hospital services, social service departments and the education and community services all working together at a neighbourhood level. That is why we should encourage family centres, but that, too, requires resources as well as policies.

Reference has been made to the difficult balance that must be struck by social workers and policy makers between the interests of parents, in law and in practice, and the interests of children. There has been a tendency, it has been suggested, to give greater emphasis to parental rights, needs and concerns than to children suspected of being at risk.

In my view, the interests of the less powerful—in this context, the children—must be protected no less, indeed rather more, than those of the more powerful, who in this context are the parents. I appreciate that a difficult judgment must be made in particular circumstances in that connection, but as a guiding and firm principle it is right for us to say that those who act on our behalf in the community—social workers and others—should take the view that the interest of the child must be considered above all others.

I appreciate that in complex situations that is often a difficult judgment to make, but as a policy posture it must be established without doubt. If that principle needs to be written into a statute or guideline, it should be written in simple terms and we should be prepared to stand by it. It must be the rule not just for social services or social workers; it must apply to all concerned.

If we gave children greater recognition of their rights, there would be less abuse and neglect. When we talk of

[Mr. Reg Freeson]

rights in this connection, we are talking about protecting children from all forms of abuse and neglect. Those rights must assume overwhelming importance.

Much has been said about the running of social service departments and the training of social workers, and I will not go over the excellent points that hon. Members have made in that connection. I have long held the view—not simply from my concern about child care but about the social services generally — that there has been a tendency to fail to distinguish between the concept of generalist or generic departments of social service and the way in which they are organised internally to meet particular social needs, in this case child care.

That is not new. We began to see it happening in the early days of what were then new comprehensive departments. I recall telling a Minister 20 years ago that we did not need the Seebohm committee to reach a conclusion that we should put all the social services under a common umbrella. In adhering to that view still, I do not believe that we should allow the generalist approach to be adopted in every activity of social service departments.

Mr. Dickens: The right hon. Gentleman has spoken of social services coming together under one umbrella. I realise that Brent has followed that practice for many years. The right hon. Gentleman may not know that the Dickens who was chairman of the Brent council of social services before he died was my father. If he were alive today, I am sure that he would wish to support the right hon. Gentleman's advice to NALGO, which was "Please do not strike".

Mr. Freeson: I do not wish to backtrack, and I must not allow the hon. Gentleman to require me to do so. I wish to adhere to my remarks about social service departments.

It is true that Brent was one of the first authorities to bring social services under one umbrella. It did so as soon as it was created, and even before the Seebohm report. I was the first chairman of the authority and I sought to implement the policy, as far as I could influence matters during the year of reorganisation under the London Government Act 1963. I advocated the policy during the authority's first meeting and it began to be implemented. That implementation was reinforced by a statutory policy change at national level. I remain of the view that social worker divisions within social service departments should not become generalist divisions and that social workers should not become generalist in their approach.

I support entirely the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow that we should require the establishment, or re-establishment, of children's officers and child care units within social service departments. If we were discussing other areas of social welfare, I would advocate the same approach. It is of great importance that there is specialism as an out-front activity within the general remit of social service teams in areas such as Brent and elsewhere.

On a shelf in my office at home I have a report which became known as the Longford report. I am not making a party point when I say that it was published by the Labour party in 1961. A committee of inquiry was set up by the Labour party's national executive at about that time under the chairmanship of Lord Longford to look into child care services. It was established long before the Seebohm inquiry. One of the central recommendations of the report, which is now well over 20 years old, was that we should establish family courts. It is sad that in 1985 we are about to consider further whether we should establish family courts at a statutory level.

There is little difference of opinion both inside and outside the House that we need statutorily to establish family courts. We do not need to wait until we have formulated the perfect model. The system must be initiated and then it must be allowed to evolve. There can be built-in methods of revision. Let us not wait another year, five years or 20 years before we bite on the bullet and create a framework within which family courts can be developed.

Even on this quiet Friday afternoon in the middle of a debate on a Back Bencher's motion, I hope that we shall be given a policy undertaking by the Under-Secretary of State on behalf of whoever he speaks for. I hope that we shall be told that that is Government policy and that very soon we shall proceed to enact legislation to establish family courts, although no commitment to do so was included in the Gracious Speech. Of course, there will be arguments about detail.

In the hope that we shall have such legislation introduced, I venture to suggest that we should adopt the Second Reading Committee procedure. If a Bill is introduced and voted on in principle, I doubt whether there will be very much difference of opinion. It will then be discussed in Standing Committee in the normal fashion. There are many views on the way in which a family court system should operate, and I believe that the proposed legislation should be tested in Committee so that expert witnesses can be called and questioned and so that there can be discussion before the legislative process. I hope that that can be done. I believe that it is an approach that we should adopt increasingly in our proceedings. It could be a source of important reform of our procedures. The proposal to establish family courts would be eminently suitable for such a procedure, and I hope that it will be employed.

When the Beckford report has been published, I hope that we shall have an opportunity to pursue its recommendations and the evidence and conclusions that will accompany them.

12.26 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I warmly endorse the closing remarks of the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) on family courts. Had I been fortunate in the ballot on private Members' motions on this occasion, or previously, I would have sought a debate on that very topic. Alternatively, perhaps Opposition time could be used for such a debate. I hope that we shall soon have an opportunity to discuss the matter in the House. As the right hon. Gentleman said, there are a number of ideas on how family courts should be run. Many of these ideas have come together over the past few years. There is much more unanimity now on how such a system could be established, and all that is needed is some good will to get things moving.

I hope that it will not be too repetitious if I repeat what others have said in congratulating the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on his success in winning the ballot and initiating the debate. It is often a temptation for a Back-Bench Member to choose a topic which is politically "sexy" when he has the good fortune

to win the ballot. Instead, the hon. Gentleman has chosen a subject that unites both sides of the House and which is very much in the public eye.

We do not know whether there is more child abuse now than previously. The nature of it is such that we may see only the tip of the iceberg. The figures that are published reflect only the information that is to hand. The facts and figures that are now being produced may well reflect what was happening previously but which was not made public. We know that the NSPCC reports a 70 per cent. rise in child abuse over the past six years and a disproportionate increase within those figures of sexual abuse of children.

Last year, more than 7,000 children under 14 suffered physical abuse—a frightening figure. This is not a topic on which I would profess to have expert knowledge but it is one about which I am worried. Before I entered the House I sat for some years as chairman of my local juvenile court and had to deal with care cases. I have worked for some years with the NSPCC both locally and as a member of its central executive committee. The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) has recently joined me on that committee. I know that he would have participated in the debate if his constituency interests had not prevented him from doing so.

Hon. Members — not least my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) — have said that parenthood is the one role in life for which one requires no experience or qualifications. From the early teens, anyone, provided he or she has no physical or medical problem and can find a willing partner, can become a parent. People do not need to be married. They can become parents regardless of their intelligence, knowledge, emotional maturity, financial means or accommodation; yet the lack of any one of those qualities can present enormous difficulties to parenthood.

As the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) pointed out, there is a basic need for education, starting at school. Not only girls need education in parentcraft, the changed relationship between a couple that occurs when a child arrives and the practical problems of feeding babies, changing nappies and coping with a baby who just goes on crying or is sick. Unfortunately, many people are not given that sort of education at school.

Couples need help and advice when a child is on its way or when it has arrived. That help and advice may be available from the district nurse or health visitor, but those people have limited time and many other duties to perform. A number of organisations offer facilities—for example, the NSPCC has half a dozen family centres and other organisations run similar centres, offering counselling and training. Often that training is fairly basic, teaching mothers how to prepare simple foods for their children. Those organisations would do more if their funding allowed it.

Even with the advantage of education or assistance, many people find that being a parent is hard work and sometimes very stressful. That is especially true of fathers. A husband may come home after a heavy day at work to find his wife exhausted and the baby crying. Some fathers simply go off to the pub, making matters even worse for the mothers. Other fathers stay put but tend to vent their exasperation on the child.

It is easy to criticise but can any one of us who has been a parent say that there was never a time when his patience with his tiny offspring was sorely tried? We may have felt like hitting the child even if we did not do so. It is encouraging that many people realise when they are nearing that stage. Of some 30,000 children involved in cases handled by the NSPCC in each of the last two years, about a quarter were referred by parents who felt that they were reaching the end of their tether and that, unless something was done, a tragic incident might occur. They turned to what is popularly known as "the Cruelty" for help, which they received.

Last year, 45 per cent. of the cases were referred by neighbours who were concerned about what was happening down the road. Social workers concerned with these cases face a real difficulty. A social worker may receive a report about what is believed to be happening in the house down the road. He or she may knock on the door and be told to go away in the sort of language that I would not repeat in the Chamber. In those circumstances, the social worker must persist. He or she must try again later in the day, must contrive to arrive on the doorstep when one of the other children returns from school, or happen to meet the mother while she is shopping. Every effort must be made to discover what is going on in the home. If he or she is unsuccessful, the social workers can apply for a constable to be issued with a search warrant. To do that, the social worker must satisfy the court that there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated or neglected, which is difficult to prove, if one has been refused access.

Mr. Ryman: It is not necessary to prove that to get a search warrant. Suspicion supported by evidence on oath that it is reasonable is enough. If proof were required, the police would never get a search warrant for anything. A belief founded on suspicion, provided it is reasonable, is enough to be granted a search warrant by most magistrates' courts.

Mr. Sims: I do not disagree with that. My point is that a court will not necessarily grant a warrant, nor should it be expected to do so, on a bit of local tittle-tattle. A social worker may find it difficult to make that application to the court. I am seeking to point out the dilemma whether social workers could or should have stronger powers in that regard. There would be all sorts of inherent dangers in stronger powers of entry.

The interdepartmental working committee, in its review issued a little earlier this year, studied the matter. Paragraphs 3.17 and 3.18 state:

> "We see no need to introduce new provisions aimed at increasing identification and notification of cases of suspected harm to children. Such matters in our view are best achieved through education, training and improvements in communication and co-operation between the various agencies involved, rather than by laws which permit or require reporting to a particular person or body . . . .
>
> Local authorities are already under a duty to cause enquiries to be made . . . . We see scope for widening this duty to cover any child feared to be at risk."

I agree broadly with those conclusions. There is some attraction in the proposal of my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) to make an order on parents to produce the child to the court, although I can see that that may be open to criticism.

Social workers, during their training, should learn how to analyse circumstances, follow them up, identify families at risk and help them. If a social worker feels that a stage has been reached when a child must be taken into care regardless of the wishes of the parent, he must produce evidence to the court for a care order to be made.

[Mr. Sims]

When I was a juvenile court magistrate I found those cases particularly distressing and by far the most difficult to deal with. To act on behalf of the state and to decide to take children from a mother and, perhaps, a father, who may be inadequate but, nevertheless, loving parents, and to put those children into care, is not something undertaken lightly.

Once the social worker of the local authority or agency has obtained an order and has the child in care a decision must be made on how to deal with the child, bearing in mind that the eventual aim must be to return the child to its parents. Meanwhile, it will probably have to be looked after in a community or foster home.

A real problem can arise when it is decided that the child should go home for some sort of trial period. What is the child's status? The parents have found that the council has taken their child from them, perhaps against their wishes, having obtained a care order. The council is looking after that child and then the parents are told that they can have the child home. Yet the child is still in care. What exactly is the position of the child and the parents?

I am attracted by the suggestion in the review, to which I have already referred, of shared care. That seems to be a meaningful concept as well as a euphonious expression. But it is a difficult judgment to know when that child in care should be returned to its family.

Many factors will have contributed to the situation in which the abuse originally occurred. In the NSPCC's study the factors were listed as marital discord, unemployment, debt and lack of self-esteem—all fairly evident. But the social worker will have to judge whether those factors are still present or to what extent they have been ameliorated and whether the circumstances have altered sufficiently to justify the child going back home. That must inevitably involve some risk-taking.

A director of a large maximum security hospital said that statistics showed that only 10 per cent. of his patients would kill again if they were discharged and that he would be delighted to release the remaining 90 per cent. if somebody could reliably tell him who they were. That is the dilemma that the social worker has in the situation that I have described.

Several references have been made to the case of Gemma Hartwell which is summarised in this week's issue of *Social Work Today*. It would be hard, having read that report, to say that any social worker took a wrong step. Nevertheless, Gemma Hartwell died.

This week some publicity has also been given to a new code of practice issued by the British Association of Social Workers. To the layman some of the items seem obvious, although one accepts that this is a relatively new field. For example, it is suggested that social workers should in future take the child's needs as the primary concern rather than concentrating on the family. One would have hoped that that had always been the case. It is also suggested that children should not be returned to their parents after being injured without a special case conference of all the people involved, chaired by an independent person. Again, that is not a very revolutionary idea.

I was interested to see reported, again in this week's issue of *Social Work Today*, a reference to a new policy in Birmingham of surprise unannounced visits by social workers to families on the at-risk register. One would have liked to think that that would be a general practice. Certainly, the child abuse register has been one of the most worthwile developments of recent years and is an area in which the NSPCC has been playing a leading role.

At the end of the day every case is individual. That is why it is so important that the social worker dealing with those individual cases should have the widest possible training and experience in the field. The most valuable training is for social workers to join local authorities and non-statutory bodies as trainees to learn the job by doing it and then to obtain qualifications. It is a pity that some local authorities have found it necessary to reduce, if not discontinue entirely, that form of training.

I shall not become too involved in the discussion about the sort of social workers we need — the generic or specialist argument—or whether the so-called Seebohm changes were what his lordship intended when he issued his report. But I ask, if a social worker is working with the elderly, the mentally handicapped, the physically handicapped, children and others, how can he build a specialist knowledge and expertise, especially with children? There must be some specialisation.

Much of our debate has centred on the physical abuse of children, but, as we know, there is also, alas, sexual abuse, which is far more difficult to detect since it often takes place within the family. I was encouraged to hear of the proposal by the Greater Manchester council to set up a sexual abuse unit. I gather that it has had some blessing from the relevant Departments and I hope that it will be set up, because it plans to offer counselling to children and parents, to train those especially involved in this area and to provide educational programmes. It is extremely important that children should be warned about, yet not alarmed by, this danger. Recently, I saw a preview of an effective video for children, accompanied by appropriate notes for teachers or whoever shows it, which I hope will soon become more widely available.

I have referred several times to the NSPCC because of my involvement with it, but I recognise that it is but one of several non-statutory bodies that do extremely good work in training, in developing child protection teams and in conducting academic studies from which we can learn. It is right that such work should be shared by local authorities and the non-statutory bodies. The latter have the advantage of specialist knowledge and experience, and they enjoy moral and financial public support. Ratepayers' and taxpayers' money can be used better by non-statutory organisations than by official central or local government bodies, not least because clients are often inclined to go to the former for help since they are not automatically associated with the establishment — they are not "the Government" or "they"—and some services such as the NSPCC operate on a 24-hour basis.

Those organisations deserve our thanks and our support. To drop a broad hint in the direction of my hon. Friend the Minister, they deserve as much central Government support as they can be given. Local authorities should also support them, and I urge some local authorities that seem to be reluctant to work with organisations such as the NSPCC to reconsider their position.

Ms. Harman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is a contradiction for the Government to say that they wish to enhance the role of voluntary organisations, as do the Opposition, but at the same time to limit the opportunities for local authorities to provide grants to such organisations

by imposing financial cuts and penalties on local authorities? Is not local authority funding of voluntary organisations as important as central Government funding, and are not the voluntary organisations suffering as a result of the cuts?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am reluctant to intervene in a partisan nature into such a constructive debate. I point out that our support for voluntary organisations has increased from £7·5 million when we came into office to about £30 million a year now, which, taking into account all the effects of inflation, is a substantial increase.

Ms. Harman *rose*——

Mr. Sims: I shall respond to two interventions, as I am sure that either the hon. Lady or the hon. Member for Oldham, West will have an opportunity to speak later. I have no wish to bring any partisan note into the debate. It has not been heard so far and I do not want it to be introduced now.

It is up to local authorities to decide how they spend their funds, and some local authorities seem reasonable while others are a little eccentric in the way in which they issue money to voluntary organisations. Generally, certain organisations such as those that I have mentioned could have more funds directed at them by local and central Government because it will be money well spent.

I fear that there will always be inadequate and incompetent parents, so there will always be some cases of child abuse. Because social workers are human beings with strengths and weaknesses, dealing with others who sometimes behave unpredictably and irrationally, they are bound sometimes to make mistakes. But with vigilance by us all, co-operation and extensive training of social workers drawn from a growing body of experience and knowledge in this sector, such cases can and must be reduced.

12.51 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I strongly commend my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on his choice of the topic that we are debating and congratulate him on the balanced, fair-minded, dispassionate and forceful way in which he presented his case. It is widely felt that he has done the House a service. The debate is particularly timely because it comes just before the publication of the Blom-Cooper report on the Jasmine Beckford case, which is expected in four days' time.

Given the recent string of well-publicised cases that add up to a horrifying picture of abuse, torture and murder of helpless children on a scale that represents an indictment of any society, and the complexity of the background and causation of some of these terrible human tragedies, it is crucial that the House concentrates unerringly on the problem and on how it can be remedied. We should not succumb to the hysterical and populist sensationalism of which there has been more than a flavour in some of the contributions this morning, and which has muddied so much public perception of the issue.

At the root of the problem is the unpalatable choice that has to be made between excessive state control and the likelihood or the actuality of seriously injured or murdered children. It might be said, although it has not been today, in over-reaction to the recent catalogue of tragedies that the only answer to the problem, on identification of any prima facie evidence of the abuse of a child, is to remove that child and put it in care.

Apart from the huge increase in the number of children in care, such a policy would seriously infringe, in at least a number of cases, on justified parental rights to look after their own children and in many cases might damage the long-term welfare of the child as well. To that extent it is important — and the remarks of the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) are relevant; I commend them — to acknowledge that there is no ultimate answer to this problem. Child abuse, horrifying though it is, can never be completely eradicated. I do not, however, say that it cannot be reduced. Again, I echo the remarks of the hon. Member for Chislehurst.

While further action can and must be taken to reduce the appalling toll of suffering by helpless children, there is always a constant tightrope to be walked between the undesirable overriding of parental rights, often to the detriment of the child, and the acceptance of a degree of risk for the child who lives with his or her parents. Policies during the last 40 years have oscillated in both directions. History shows that, sooner or later, whatever action is taken will be criticised on the other count.

The conflict of duties is enshrined in the legislation. The Children and Young Persons Act 1969 requires children who are shown to be at risk to be protected, while the Child Care Act 1980 requires local authorities to work to prevent children from having to go into care. The social worker, the person at the sharp end, has to identify which of these two contrary models is appropriate in each case. Sometimes there is an extremely difficult balance to be drawn between the rights of the child and the rights of parents. Although decisions may frequently have gone in the parents' favour during the past few years, which I support, the balance should not be redressed to the extent of rehabilitation with the parents not being attempted in most cases.

I am glad that, as I feared might happen, there has not been a degree of social worker bashing in this debate. The evidence shows that it is not true that social workers have failed to make an impact upon the incidence of child abuse. The NSPCC figures show that the numbers of fatally or seriously injured children declined from about 820 in 1977 to about 650 in 1982. It is still a very high figure but it shows that there has been a decline. It suggests that children's lives are being saved. An analysis of re-injuries within one year of the initial incident shows that there has been a fall from over 11 per cent. in 1977 to under 7 per cent. in 1982. That, together with the virtual disappearance of children with multiple injuries, shows that the preventive measures that have been taken have had some success, but they have to be set against the background of an overall increase in physical abuse since 1977.

None of this is to deny that the scale of abuse today is still horrifying and that more effective action desperately needs to be taken. In 1976 the Select Committee on violence in the family suggested that in England and Wales 3,000 children are severely injured each year, that a further 40,000 children suffer moderate or mild injuries, and that about 250 children die from their injuries, while 400 suffer brain damage or become mentally retarded. By any standard, these are frightening figures, but they are regarded by the profession as conservative.

[Mr. Michael Meacher]

What action should be taken depends upon one's view of the fundamental causes of child abuse. Certain people — the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) is one of them—believe that it is the result of the collapse of family life and of the decline in law and order. They say that we need to return to the stable families of the Victorian era and to strong deterrence for those who breach the bounds of decency. I am glad that the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) said that what such people tend to forget is the scale of child abuse, exploitation and outright slavery in the real world of Victorian values. I understand that rather more than 3,000 children under five died in 1870, more than 200 of whose deaths were officially attributed to manslaughter and nearly 100 of which were attributed to neglect.

The causes of child abuse have been shown by repeated analyses to be associated especially with unemployment, a criminal record before the abuse, and stress. Social stress that precipitates violence includes poor housing, financial difficulties, unemployment and illness. I do not imagine that any of us is surprised at that. I am not suggesting for a moment that such factors cause abuse, but they can act as a trigger. An ill or fretful child being looked after by a mother who is herself ill is bad enough, but the problem can become intolerable if there is a sudden bereavement, redundancy notice, or threat of eviction.

All of those factors associated with abuse require remedies to wider social problems. Anybody who is serious about such remedies must recognise that there must be a significant increase in resources if we are to get to the root of the problem. Short of that, substantial administrative improvements can, and I believe must, be made.

The British Association of Social Workers has proposed that local authorities should have a statutory duty to provide adequate family support services, including respite care and sufficient places in child nurseries. My hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) has made that point eloquently yet again today. The child care law review report to Ministers recommends the wider use of respite care, but the omission of any statutory duty to provide it is presumably explained by the Government's reluctance to commit resources to such work. If that is so, I can only observe that their reluctance is extremely odd as the DHSS will spend far more picking up the pieces resulting from child abuse in having to provide institutional care and funding lengthy and costly court cases.

I am not making a party political point——

Mr. Whitney: It just seems like it.

Mr. Meacher: I am happy for the Minister to reply in due course. It is ironic to hear Conservative Members advocating strengthening family life — which we all believe in — when, three days ago, they used their overwhelming majority to crush an EEC draft directive which would give parents the legal right to paid leave to be with their children. I hope that the Government will reconsider that decision as the vast majority of people will regard the draft directive as desirable.

Mr. Ryman: I do not want to make a partisan point, but it is no use imposing a statutory obligation on local authorities, however worthy and commendable, unless they are given the money necessary to implement it. Such has been the case with the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970: many local authorities are flagrantly disobeying the law because they cannot afford to obey it.

Mr. Meacher: Any pretensions to better provision must be accompanied by extra resources or the claim is hollow. The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act is a good example, and provisions concerning homeless people is another. It is impossible for local authorities to tackle these tragic human problems unless they are given adequate resources.

Extra resources should be directed towards more post-qualifying training which, it is widely agreed, is most effective for child abuse work. Too much of the time allocated now goes on basic social work training. If mandatory awards were given for basic training, the social services could then concentrate on better targeted and more cost effective in-service training.

Supervision is crucial for all field workers, and never more so than in child abuse cases. Yet at present there is not enough and it should be increased. It is right to say that social workers work under great pressure and even the most experienced can, and do, make mistakes under the strain. The greatest danger is perhaps that the risk may not be recognised, or may even be denied. That may even happen in the case of experienced workers and is clearly a symptom of anxiety. Another danger is that, if a client fails to keep an appointment on a busy day, it may generate a sense of relief rather than giving a warning light. For those reasons, supervision is vital and needs to be more systematic than at present.

My next point concerns the DHSS and does not require any extra resources. I say again in measured tones that a less panicky and steadier response is needed from the DHSS. Contrary to the practice in any other profession, a single instance of bad practice by a social worker or social work team can lead to a missive being issued by the DHSS. By contrast, can one imagine that, because a woman was recently sent home from hospital with seven broken ribs and later died, a letter was sent from the DHSS to advise doctors to X-ray motor accident victims? The medical profession would be outraged. Yet that is what has been done to the social work profession after each child abuse tragedy.

Without in any way condoning mistakes, I suggest that in the face of large swings of public opinion during the past decade or so we need a carefully considered evolution of policy and not, after a tragedy, the simple discharging of directives which relate to particular problems while perhaps not being relevant to the rest of the country.

If the Government take one message away from the debate it should be that attention must be paid to the big public campaign to introduce family courts. One problem is that court proceedings can and do take a long time. When I was preparing for the debate, I read of one wardship case which recently took six years to resolve. Children can be exposed to risk pending the conclusion of court proceedings, and the delay can act as a disincentive to pursuing care or wardship applications.

If family courts were set up, their composition could be rearranged quickly if the need arose in order to minimise delay. The excellent practice in matrimonial proceedings of having the originating application followed by an initial hearing could be extended to child care cases in a family

court, which would also minimise delay. All of those things are eminently desirable and would be widely supported throughout the House.

Co-ordination between professionals, which includes teachers, general practitioners and health visitors as well as social workers, still breaks down although that is now less common. General practitioners, for example, still attend only one in ten, or fewer, of the case conferences to which they are invited, even though the work of the area review committees that co-ordinate the work of different practitioners is central to good case management.

Indeed, BASW has now gone further in recommending as part of its three new codes of practice, which were issued a few days ago, a child abuse consultant in each area independent of case line management to service and stimulate the area review committee, and to run the register which I believe covers the sexual abuse of children as well. I understand that a MORI survey showed that up to 10 per cent. of children experience some sexual abuse.

The third recommendation is that consultants should offer expert advice. That could help to standardise best practice throughout the country. Procedures must be tightened before children are returned to their parents after being subjected to injury. BASW suggests in its latest code of practice that a child should not be returned

"without a special case conference of all the people involved, chaired by an independent person."

The hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) has decided to introduce a private Member's Bill on the subject and suggests that the approval of a magistrates court should be required in such cases. Perhaps that is right, but there can be no foolproof solution. In 1977, for example, in the Wayne Brewer case, Somerset social services department was stridently opposed to the return of the four-year-old Wayne to his mother and stepfather. It was overruled by the court and Wayne later died at his stepfather's hands.

We should consider why other European countries such as France and West Germany do not experience the problem on such a scale. Is it because we have a privatised attitude to children? Perhaps children are regarded as the private property of their parents. I do not know, but allegations from the public are often well-founded and should be followed up.

The courageous neighbour in the Heidi Koseda case persisted in trying to get something done and was branded a Nosey Parker. The sanctity of the family is often regarded as inviolate.

In many cases neighbours hear screams but do nothing to intervene. The most striking example is the tragic case of Leoni Keating who roamed a camp site at 1 am looking for her mother. The newspapers condemned her hippy-like mother for leaving her at night. They did not condemn those who saw and heard the child but did nothing to protect her. The absence of any sense of social, collective or community responsibility for children in any society is truly callous and inhuman.

It is over 10 years since the Maria Colwell tragedy. Since then dozens of ad hoc inquiries have investigated subsequent deaths. It is more than 40 years since the Curtis case which led to the 1948 children's legislation. Despite training for social work being at record levels, and despite regular and anguished post-mortems, Britain's relative record in European is frankly appalling.

I offer a proposal. In the light of the intense public disquiet, the Government should set up a Royal Commission to examine all aspects of child abuse and the provision for children in care because they are at risk. It would be time-limited and out of the hands of party politicians. It would certainly cost less than all the public inquiries that will take place over the next 10 years.

Only such a commission will match up to the intense public concern and anxiety. Only that will draw together on a sufficiently comprehensive and authoritative basis the new and systematic reconsideration of the whole issue that is clearly needed in the light of the recent series of horrifying tragedies. I strongly recommend that course to the Minister.

1.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I join other hon. Members in warmly congratulating the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) not only on his good fortune in coming top in the private Members' ballot, but on the motion that he tabled and the intelligent and sensitive way in which he moved it, which has promoted a debate of extraordinary quality.

We always have very good debates on Fridays when, to a large extent, the toing and froing of partisan concern is often absent. On no occasion has that been demonstrated more clearly than today, and that has contributed to the very high quality of the debate. The contributions from hon. Members on both sides of the House showed knowledge, considerable experience and, above all, sensitivity and compassion about a subject which moves us all.

I wish to highlight one or two points that have put this issue so high in the public concern. In this year alone, there has been the case of the 22-month-old girl who was killed by a ball of wool being pushed into her mouth; the case of Jasmine Beckford, aged four, who after 10 months of terror, was finally beaten to death by her stepfather; the 21-month-old baby Tyra Henry, who was battered and covered with 57 bites; the child Christopher Stock who was bitten and beaten by his mother; Heidi Koseda, whom many hon. Members mentioned; and Charlene Salt, who was shut in a drawer and died of brain haemorrhage. Against such a background, the public concern, which we all share, is not only entirely understandable, but well accepted on both sides of the House.

I wish to underline a point made by a number of hon. Members—that without resiling for one moment from that concern, I must emphasise that, sadly, child abuse is by no means a problem new to British society. Only last year the NSPCC held its centenary celebration. That society has made a remarkable contribution to British life. I pay tribute to the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), who is a leading member of that organisation and, indeed, contributes in many other areas of social policy that go well beyond this House.

Therefore, for at least a century, people in British society have been acting and working against the evils of child abuse. By 1945, there was deep concern following the death in care of the child Dennis O'Neill, which led to the Monckton inquiry. In 1973, there was the case of Maria Colwell.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) reminded the House of the figures produced by the NSPCC on the killing and serious injury of children. There are difficulties in collecting such figures, as the NSPCC would be ready to accept, but they show that in 1977 there were

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

822 cases, and in 1982 there were 647. During that six-year period there was a fluctuation in the figures, but at least there was no increase over the total period.

Hon. Members have recognised that some public concern may be a reflection of the more effective services resulting in the discovery of those horrible cases, whereas, in days, years, decades and generations gone by, they may not have been discovered.

I join hon. Members in recognising the good work that is done by the great majority of social workers. As the hon. Member for Oldham, West said, this is a question not of bashing social workers but of recognition of a national problem.

Another reason for the heightened perception of this whole problem is the greater readiness to discuss the phenomenon of child sexual abuse. I am ready to believe that a great deal of it went on in years gone by and that only now are people prepared to talk about it and bring it into the open.

Thus, we cannot say, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst said, whether there is an explosion or what level of incidence there is. We only know that it is happening. Whether 647 children are killed or seriously injured, as the NSPCC recorded in 1982, or whether the figure is seven, that is seven or 647 too many.

I agree with the hon. Member for Oldham, West that it must be recognised that this phenomenon, desperate and horrifying though it is, can never be totally eradicated. Against that, whether we are in Government, in local authorities, in the voluntary organisations or are neighbours or parents, none of us can be satisfied. We must take action and keep working at the problem so that we go on reducing its incidence.

I shall catalogue briefly some of the actions that the Government are taking, and taking urgently. I had intended to list them in more detail, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) for spelling out a number of the initiatives that have been taken.

The Government's range of action must be limited, important though it is. One of our main functions is to provide the legal framework, and that responsibility we well accept. The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) referred to the prolificacy of current laws. There is some confusion because no fewer than seven statutes are relevant to this area. There is no doubt that good, sound and clear laws are essential to the handling of child abuse cases.

We believe that, on the whole, the present system provides adequate powers, though important changes, in addition to simplification and clarification, are necessary. In April 1984, the Select Committee on Social Services produced an excellent report on children in care in which it recognised that the law was ripe for reform. The Department responded quickly by setting up in July a working party to review child care law. That produced a comprehensive and thorough report, and it did so with commendable speed. It was published on 4 October this year. That working party also produced 12 interim discussion papers. The report recognised that a considerable clarification and simplification of the law was needed so that all could easily understand their responsibilities and the framework in which they must operate in this delicate area.

Major improvements must be made to correct serious failings in the system. In essence, the law should encapsulate what is good practice. There are areas where the law is lagging behind practice as it is found in the better local authorities and among the better agencies. There is no need to wait for the law to be changed. We must change some areas of the law, but, with the best will in the world, and with the mechanisms that our constitutional arrangements necessarily and rightly impose upon us, we are talking inevitably of a longer time scale than we accept is desirable in meeting the problems with which we have to deal.

I shall offer three examples of the changes for which we are looking. First, it can be difficult to take children into care where serious harm is thought likely in future, or to retain children in care where a return home may be dangerous. The working party has recommended changes so that children can be committed to care more easily by reference to a magistrates' court where substantial harm is thought likely in future. We are anxious not to provide a carte blanche for removing children, and important safeguards are proposed for the court to test properly the evidence on which such plans are made. This is a difficult area, as reflected by the exchanges between the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) and my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst.

Secondly, the working party recommended that the present duty of social workers to investigate reports should be strengthened to provide for investigation wherever there is actual or likely harm to the child, and to take whatever action is necessary. In this instance the law lags behind good practice which is even now followed in a number of areas.

Thirdly, there are regulations which protect children who are placed with foster parents and the administration of children's homes. But there is no power to make regulations covering children at home on a trial basis. The working party recommended that there should be a general regulation-making power covering all children in care no matter where they are placed.

That is a comprehensive set of proposals and we look forward to the consultation process. We must proceed with due measured tread, taking account of the responses, much as we should like to move forward with still greater speed and a greater sense of urgency. The law is not susceptible to the rate of improvement that we should like to introduce by administrative measures. Building on the existing legal foundation, we are taking steps to develop a procedural framework for dealing with child abuse.

The message that emerges from all the inquiries that have taken place refers to the critical need for good and improved collaboration between all the agencies that continue to be involved. Over the past 15 years a series of guidance notes have been issued. The notes have reflected increasing knowledge and the development of experience of those dealing with the problem, as well as a change in the nature of the problem itself.

I am sure that the time is now right to bring the guidance up to date. Our aim is to provide a broad collaborative framework within which we can develop the best practice of child care.

There have been a series of discussions with experts which have produced a number of useful ideas. Within weeks we shall be issuing a consultative paper on the recommendations. This basic collaborative machinery includes the use of child abuse registers and case

conferences to which the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) referred. The review has included the prevention of and handling of cases of child sexual abuse. This is a relatively new type of case for professional staff. Clearly, a great deal of experience and skill must be acquired and developed in that highly sensitive area.

Another area of guidance about which we have been concerned is the way that local authorities carry out their existing statutory duty to review the cases of all children in their care at least every six months. Recent research has shown that practice varies considerably from one local authority to another, not only in the conduct of the review but in the frequency, who attends and what is seen to be the purpose of the review. A consultation exercise was carried out at the end of last year and comments have now been received on all aspects of reviews. There is broad agreement on the need for minimum standards to be laid down and accepted. We shall be issuing a circular of guidance and regulations with a view to improving the management and planning of the situation of all children in care.

Within the framework of law and guidance, quality of care is important. Whatever the number of laws we pass and however well worked out the guidance issued by DHSS, the delivery of care is what matters. The knowledge and skill of the professional staff in a wide range of disciplines and professions are important. The continuing development of professional expertise is essential. Responsibility for the content and organisation of training rests with the professions, the various bodies responsible for professional training and the management in agencies.

Training for social workers is especially important. They must understand and learn to recognise potentially harmful situations. They need to be familiar with the law and their particular responsibilities as well as local policies for dealing with cases. The training of social workers falls into two main groups — initial or basic training and specialist in-service training. Initial qualifying training leads to either the certificate of qualification in social work or the certificate in social work. The courses include both teaching the basic knowledge of working with families and the law and practical experience. Responsibility for the approval of these courses rests with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. To complement this basic training there is a wide range of opportunities for specialist in-service training, some provided under the auspices of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and much organised by local authorities.

We were pleased that the central council gave special attention at its recent meeting to training on child abuse. We very much welcome its intention to review, with those providing the courses, the need for additional teaching and practice on child abuse. The council will consider also the need for other training initiatives. Much new input is needed. I very much look forward to having discussions with the central council to consider ways in which we can continue to improve co-operation between the Department at the centre and the central council. Co-operation with local authorities and their social security department is another vital element that we must obtain. Everyone involved in this work recognises the need for yet another new look to be taken at these problems in the light of worrying developments.

This week, a policy document by the British Association of Social Workers has been published. The paper has been developed to provide a code of practice for the social work profession. While there will obviously be some differences between the Department and the BASW regarding the detail, in general I would give its major thrust a warm welcome, particularly the list of proposals. The first proposal states:

> "The Association's Codes of Practice stress that the child should *always* be considered the primary client in an abusing family."

We accept and wholly endorse that as the basic principle of this work. That point was made by the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson), whose long experience is recognised. The importance of the child as the primary client must enlighten all our work and our approach.

The other point that I wish to choose from the general digest of proposals is number four—the suggestion of a child abuse consultant. That may not necessarily be the right way to proceed, but the recommendation stresses that there should be expert advice on child abuse available to authorities. That must be right, and we happily endorse it.

Those two steps — the proposal by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, and the document produced by the BASW — are to be greatly welcomed. They suggest that everyone involved in the work is moving quickly in the right direction together.

Mr. Meacher: Before the Minister concludes his remarks, will he reply to what I said about what I am sure he agrees is the substantive point of the debate? That is the demand that the Government should take seriously now the establishment of a family court, first to minimise the wholly unacceptable delays in court and wardship proceedings, and, secondly, because of the inconsistency in having a child care law review, but not altering the background in the court where the law is applied. What are the Government's proposals in that regard?

Mr. Whitney: I was not about to end my speech. I shall return to that point later, and I understand the hon. Gentleman's anxiety.

I was about to deal with the question of specialists. We have had an interesting series of exchanges on what is now developing into a rather sharp debate about the generic versus the specialisation issue. We shall take careful account of all the points made, but it is not for me to pontificate now from the Dispatch Box about such a profound and important topic. We shall take note of what has been said and, clearly, we are keeping in close touch with the subject. We are well aware that some local authorities are developing their area teams, and increasingly identifying the need of some social workers to concentrate on services to protect children. We await the results of the study of ten social services inspectorate in that area.

Local authorities and voluntary organisations have developed a wide range of facilities. Many of them have been mentioned, such as day and family centres, and their provision of help and advice to children and families is welcome. Reference was made to the importance of the under-fives and to nursery provision. That objective is extremely desirable, and, if resources were unlimited, we should like to make more progress than has already been made.

[Mr. Whitney]

I have seen a good deal of the work that has been achieved by the under-fives initiative, working in co-operation with many of the voluntary agencies which do such good work in the field. About £6 million has been made available over three years and that is a good example of co-operation between the Government and the taxpayer and the local authority and voluntary agencies to mobilise the good will and commitment that exist. That under-fives initiative is something to which we should attach importance.

Local authorities have also encouraged the development of self-help groups in various areas in the community which offer counselling services to families under stress, such as telephone help lines. The NSPCC has a special place in this story of success with its pioneering work to find new ways to help children and families. Its intention to develop child protection teams to complement services provided by local authorities is an optimistic sign for the future.

But no profession is an island and, as I said earlier, the crucial need is to develop the collaboration and the inter-professional understanding between all concerned — social workers, doctors, health visitors and the police. A great deal has been achieved by the local child abuse review committees in developing multiprofessional training. I was concerned to hear one hon. Member suggest that some of those committees were rather poorly attended and we must ensure that the best practice is followed everywhere.

I want to mention two areas in which we are doing work to help in the development of expertise. The first is, as I said earlier, the work of our social services inspectorate which is undertaking an urgent inspection of the supervision of social workers in the assessment and monitoring of child abuse. The aim is to identify models for good practice to produce a format which social services departments can use to scrutinise their services and to explore the implications for training. The conclusions will be based on the examination of a large number of cases and discussions with social workers and managers. I am looking forward to receiving a report on that work by the end of the year.

Secondly, we have in hand a continuing programme of research—I think that that was requested by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) —into various aspects of child care activity, including child abuse. A major programme of nine pieces of research, which was completed at the end of last year, dealt in various ways with social workers' decision making in child care.

A number of common themes can be drawn from the research which have implications for practice. One example is the need for improved planning when a child enters care and during its time in care. We consider that it is important that the lessons for good practice which have emerged from the research be conveyed to local authorities and organisations, not just to management, but to individual social workers and voluntary workers. Therefore, the Department is mounting a national dissemination exercise which includes a series of regional seminars and the development of training aids and material to promote the messages of that research. The first national seminar will take place early next year.

I have been on my feet far too long, but I want to refer briefly to a number of points to which the hon. Member for Oldham, West has drawn my attention. We have heard two broad views on sentencing, not necessarily from opposite sides of the House. There is undoubtedly public concern and that I am sure must be recognised. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) in his usual passionate and informed way evinced concern about employment policies, particularly in respect of those who had some record of convictions, and their employment in child work.

Several hon. Members mentioned the length of court proceedings, and the hon. Member for Oldham, West and others mentioned the family court. The House will recognise that those matters are outside the responsibility of the DHSS. They affect the Home Office, the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office. Therefore, all that I can undertake to do is to ensure that the anxieties which have been expressed forcefully during the debate are brought to the attention of the Secretaries of State responsible for such matters.

I remind the House that the Select Committee on Social Services recognised that, whatever the ultimate decision may be, it would take a long time to set up a family court. The Select Committee believed that the review of child care should not await a decision on the family court.

Mr. Ryman: Why does the Minister say that it would take a long time to establish the legal framework for a family court?

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman knows much more about the law than I do and has been in this place for longer than I have. He will accept that the constitutional processes cannot be hurried.

Although I recognise the views that have been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, the points that we made in our review of child care law could fit into the present court system and into any future family court system. I recognise the support for family courts that has been expressed on both sides of the House, but my immediate priority is to introduce as quickly as possible improvements in dealing with cases of child abuse. We should remember that the best may be the enemy of the good.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The Minister said that it would take a long time to establish a family court. Is he aware that, following the Courts Act 1971, the Crown courts, which represented an enormous change, were set up at the beginning of 1972 without undue difficulty? When it was decided to abolish the probate, divorce and admiralty division of the High court, the family division was set up almost overnight. The Minister is wrong to suggest that a proper family court could not be set up within three to six months.

Mr. Whitney: The hon. and learned Gentleman is trying to take me far beyond the responsibilities of the DHSS. There is by no means complete agreement on the nature and scope of a family court. But that is not a matter for me; what is a matter for me is to ensure that the DHSS takes every action possible to support social security departments, the voluntary agencies and all workers in this area.

This is a challenge not just for the Government or for my Department—although we are taking quickly every

necessary action that is possible within our sphere—but for the whole of British society. British society must mobilise itself to meet this evil and deal with it. The debate will, by the very non-partisan nature of our deliberations, have given a signal to the nation that the House of Commons is determined to do everything possible to combat the evil of child abuse.

1.50 pm

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): The hour is late and I do not want to repeat any points that have already been made in this excellent debate. However, I was appalled by the nonchalant complacency shown by the Under-Secretary.

I recognise the seriousness of the problem, about which two things must be done. The crux of the matter is that there is both a long-term policy to be followed with such factors as education, improved housing and so on, and a short-term, urgent policy of taking immediate steps to prevent further child abuse through the lessons that we have already learnt.

I make an extremely simple, practical and sensible suggestion that has not yet been mentioned. I recognise the conflict between the privacy of the home, and the suspicion raised by child abuse and the need to enter the privacy of the home by either a social worker or a policeman. Would not a more simple and better solution be to have regular medical check-ups on children of school age and, with the consent of their parents, on children of under shcool age? Many physical illnesses and abuses could be detected at an early stage.

Child abuse is an appallingly difficult problem. It is difficult to obtain satisfactory evidence to place before a court in child abuse cases. All the talk about improving the legal machinery is justified. One cannot bring a case to court unless one has satisfactory evidence to place before it. One of the difficulties in child abuse is the lack of a complainant because nobody makes a complaint, unless they happen by chance to come across the abuse that is the subject matter of the subsequent proceedings.

Recently I came across a case that appalled me concerning a responsible member of a profession, a consultant doctor in a leading teaching hospital. She was examining a child on a routine matter when the nurse told her that she suspected that the child had been physically maltreated by the parents. An X-ray revealed certain injuries. The doctor took on the matter and made inquiries. She interviewed both parent, who denied any abuse of the child. She accepted those denials, although evidence to the contrary was staring her in the face from the X-rays that had been taken.

The doctor refused to refer the matter to the police or any other authorities and referred it simply to the community health doctor, who visited the parents, who again denied having abused the child. Subsequently the child was so badly treated by the parents that it was necessary for the local authority to intervene.

I mention that anecdote because here was an example of a responsible person, a consultant doctor, with evidence staring her in the face, who, for understandable and genuine reasons, flatly refused to make a complaint to the police because she thought it would upset the parents. It is far better for the parents to be upset. The paramount interest is the welfare of the child. We do not want similar incidents to occur again.

Social workers have been criticised for being slow to make complaints to the authorities, but that applies not only to social workers but to many professional people, including the clergy and doctors. We are faced with the practical difficulty of finding out what happened behind closed doors in homes where it is suspected that there is child abuse.

I disagree with those who say that unless there is evidence we should be slow to intervene. One can never obtain satisfactory evidence; one has to act upon suspicion. It would be far better to act on suspicion and to be over-cautious than to run the unjustifiable risk of allowing children to be harmed because of the fear that parents or neighbours may be offended. A fine balance has to be drawn between the right of parents to look after their children and intervention by the authorities. However, it is far better for the authorities to intervene and for the child to be safeguarded before there is abuse than to be slow off the mark because of the risk of offending parents.

Reference has been made in this debate to the difficulties that arise before a child can be taken away from its parents. I recognise those difficulties. I have experienced several such cases in my constituency. However, it is better to intervene promptly and to take children into care on a temporary basis and hope to reunite them with their parents later than to risk appalling tragedies.

Ms. Harman: Does my hon. Friend agree that what was said by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State about family courts is quite wrong? The Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, the British Association of Social Workers, the Association of Directors of Social Services, the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, the Law Society and the Children's Legal Centre agree that the differences between them about what family courts should be like are narrow. All of them are prepared to collaborate with the Government in setting up family courts. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's argument that there are differences and that family courts cannot yet be set up is not good enough for those who are involved in this work.

Mr. Ryman: I have advocated for many years the establishment of family courts. That was before all those eminent organisations came to that view. I thought that I had already condemned the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's complacency and his reluctance to establish family courts. He has shifted the responsibility on to the shoulders of other Ministers because of some real or imagined difficulty.

Reference was made in the debate to Crown courts having been transformed overnight by the Courts Act 1971. That was an over-simplification. All courts of quarter sessions and assize were called overnight Crown courts. A similar over-simplification took place when the former Prime Minister of a Labour Government, Mr. Harold Wilson, produced 10 new universities. Overnight he created universities from what had previously been called technical colleges. That is not, perhaps, a fair point. However, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State has exaggerated the difficulties that are involved in establishing family courts. Many learned and experienced organisations have given a great deal of thought to this matter. They are unanimous in wanting family courts to

[Mr. Ryman]

be established. I do not understand the Government's reluctance to push this matter forward quickly and forcibly.

This is a debate in which robust thinking should be expressed. It should not contain the wishy-washy, emotional claptrap that has crept into the speeches of certain hon. Members. I refer to sentencing policy. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) had the impertinence to say that he was addressing judges and speaking on behalf of millions of children. He epitomised his ignorance by saying that judges should take account of the feelings of victims. Of course they do that. The judge is the best person to pass an appropriate sentence because he knows the full facts of each case. He also knows the antecedents of the defendant. Parliament should not interfere with the judiciary's sentencing powers, although it can make people's feelings about certain cases quite clear.

Newspapers wrongly exaggerate the disparity of sentences. No newspaper reporter knows all of the facts but hears only what is said in court. Much of the evidence in child abuse cases is not discussed publicly to save embarrassment or because matters are sensitive or complex. Pages of the statement are referred to. It is quite wrong for hon. Members who do not know the full facts of a case to attack the judiciary. We all agree that child abuse demands severe sentences but the decision must rest with the judiciary.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) can be relied upon to be a moral crusader in any cause that happens to come along on a Friday, whether it be liquor, sex, abortion or anything else. In his evangelical fervour he made the point, which I simply could not understand, that there is some difficulty finding out about previous convictions in Scotland when children are put in charge of parents in England. I cannot see any difficulty.

The police can easily find out about previous convictions on their computer if the offence was committed in Wales, Scotland, Ireland or anywhere else. I cannot see why the same machinery should not work for child abuse cases. It is not difficult to obtain details of convictions in Scotland, as the right hon. Gentleman suggested. The police can find the information if asked to investigate.

I did not understand at all the argument advanced by the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock). He said that a child had been sexually abused in care, that the complaint had been made by her father who is serving a sentence for murder in a prison near his constituency and that the police had refused to act. I do not believe that the police would flatly refuse to investigate such an allegation. I suspect that the complaint might be frivolous or based on unreliable evidence. If such a complaint really is not investigated, the hon. Gentleman has a remedy.

Mr. Whitney: That case is being investigated. I have called for an inquiry and understand that the responsible social service department is looking into the matter.

Mr. Ryman: I am grateful to the Minister.

The Government's thinking on these matters is awfully woolly. The Minister boasts, and by implication takes pride in the fact that lots of organisations have produced lots of reports, there is a vast amount of documentation floating around, lots of committees are being formed, inspectors are being appointed and lots of organisations are talking about the issue. That is commendable in the long term, but does nothing to deal with the immediate problem, which is to prevent further incidents of child abuse in so far as that can be done.

The Government's attitude is complacent, nonchalant, woolly and feeble. What disturbs me is that the Government recognise that resources must be allocated to deal with such problems, yet flatly refuse to allocate them. It is no use the Government saying that they will do this or that if, by the same token, they refuse to provide the money to deal with problems as they arise. That is a false economy, as those problems subsequently become much more expensive to resolve.

The Government must make up their mind. If they are to deal with the matter realistically, as they profess that they want to, they must provide the resources. Incidentally, the Minister seems to have disappeared. I hope that I have not driven him out of the Chamber. I am sorry that he is not here as I was about to criticise the Government. I see no reason not to be partisan in this debate. I do not know why he has disappeared, but perhaps he will do us the honour of returning in a moment.

The Government have done nothing to be proud of. All these pompous platitudes and sanctimonious sentiments are expressed from the Treasury Bench, yet the Government do not have the decency to provide sufficient resources. They criticise everybody and pay the highest tribute to people who are doing excellent work, yet they have not got the courage of their conviction to provide the money necessary to deal with these matters. How can one say that one has done everything to prevent child abuse if an area has very poor housing, high unemployment, appalling social conditions and shortages of everything?

Happily, the Minister has returned to his place, so perhaps I can give him one example. To some extent the many cases of incest occur because of poor housing conditions. Many such cases are not prosecuted, and what we see in the Crown courts are simply the tip of the iceberg. Many cases of incest are not discovered for years. There are cases before the court where the sexual abuse of the child occurred several years ago, although nobody knew about it because the child did not complain until she was much older. Such cases are a direct result of the appalling social conditions in which many of our people have to live. The Minister should come to grips with that problem instead of waffling away about the vast amount of documentation produced by various Departments.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ryman: I shall in a moment, but I wish first to finish my point. I was hoping to obtain some sort of reaction from the Government, not from the Back Benches. The Government should make specific proposals instead of simply talking in generalities and making irrelevant comments.

Mr. Rowe: Did the hon. Gentleman hear the recent phone-in on sexual abuse which made it clear that many instances of child abuse had nothing to do with housing conditions? Indeed, the existence of separate rooms made it easier for offences to occur. One should be wary about drawing too facile a comparison between social conditions and that sort of offence.

Mr. Ryman: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman is trying to be obtuse or whether he cannot help it. I did not hear the programme but it is plain as a pikestaff to me that no general conclusion can be drawn. However, it is also equally clear that adverse social conditions such as exist in my constituency in the north-east of England make it more likely for such difficulties to occur. I should have thought that it was obvious to anybody that I am not for a moment suggesting that these things occur because of adverse social conditions. Of course they do not. There are other causes, but against a background of poor social conditions they are more likely to occur. That is the point.

Existing legal procedures have been justifiably criticised. Practical difficulties are caused because the courts have so much work and because of the long delay before cases are brought to court. There has been an improvement in recent years. The waiting period between committal and trial is now much shorter. The Government have done much to achieve that in London and elsewhere. However, wardship proceedings are still interminably long. One of the many reasons why family courts should be established urgently is that the existing procedure is too tortuous and too slow.

2.10 pm

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The abuse of children is one of the most horrifying of crimes for many reasons. Chief amongst the reasons is the relative helplessness of the victims and the abuse of trust that is so often involved.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on giving us the opportunity to debate this important subject. In the main, the debate has been constructive.

Hon. Members have spoken of many examples of the physical and sexual abuse of children. Almost every day we read in the newspapers about cases which are so horrific that they must turn every parent's heart cold with horror and apprehension. Precisely because the subject is so emotional, it is important that we in Parliament address it with a clear and calm mind.

These terrible cases are increasingly well highlighted and where they reveal gaps in the protection offered by the law or in social services procedures, remedial action must follow. Hon. Members have made many suggestions which I hope will be taken up as part of that process.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury, (Mr. Walters) on the choice of his private Member's Bill which is aimed at plugging one gap. He proposes that magistrates' courts should give approval before a child in local authority care is returned to its parents or to the home from which it was removed. That will not solve all problems, but it is a clear and important step forward and I wish it well.

I shall deal not with matters that have already been discussed today, but with an entirely different aspect of child abuse which is widespread but which only exceptionally captures the headlines—and that is usually in combination with another tragedy such as a fire, a burglary or a case such as that involving Leoni Keating. At what age should a parent leave a child unattended? How old should a person be before he or she is allowed to look after young children? Those questions are important because neglect of responsibility is as much an abuse of a child as a physical assault.

The law is not generally backward in laying down minimum standards of behaviour and yet when the opportunities for avoiding a tragedy are so obvious there is a curious and inexplicable gap. There are many myths about when it is legal to leave a child and with whom. The myths are contradictory and none has the force of law.

The matter first came to my attention when a constituent came to my surgery and said that she had been looking for a babysitter. She had been offered the services of a neighbour's 14-year-old daughter. She had it in mind that this would be illegal, but she could not find out whether it was. She had been unable to find any official guidance on the subject.

Any parents leaving their children either alone or with another person must exercise personal judgment about suitability. Responsible parents will always err on the side of caution. Are they not also entitled to some official guidance? We have heard repeatedly that parenthood is the one activity for which no training is given and about the need for guidance and codes of practice.

On 1 April I tabled a question asking my hon. Friend the Minister whether

"he has any proposals for legislation or a code of conduct concerning the minimum age at which a child can be left unsupervised."

He replied:

"No. Wilful neglect of a child aged under 16 by a person aged 16 or over with responsibility for the child is already an offence in certain circumstances (section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933).—[*Official Report*, 1 April 1985; Vol. 76, c. 495.]

What are those circumstances? I looked at the Act, which states:

"If any person who has attained the age of sixteen years and has the custody, charge, or care of any child or young person under that age, wilfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects, abandons, or exposes him, or causes or procures him to be assaulted, ill-treated, neglected, abandoned, or exposed, in a manner likely to cause him unnecessary suffering or injury to health . . . that person shall be guilty of a misdemeanour."

That creates a general responsibility on the person over 16 not to neglect someone in his or her care who is under that age. But does it mean that someone cannot use a 15-year-old babysitter? Does it mean that a parent cannot leave his 15-year-old son unattended? Where is the borderline? What is the guidance for parents?

The importance of the question is highlighted by research that suggests that a large number of children aged between seven and 11, from all social groups, are left alone—not only after school, but for days on end during school holidays. There are obvious difficulties in laying down minimum standards, and I fully recognise that. I understand that problems arise when both parents work. But is it right that children should suffer as a consequence?

I can understand the logic of creating a general duty of care without defining the details, leaving each position to be decided on its merits, but I do not agree with that approach. If we create a criminal offence, people are entitled to some guidance. It is not good enough to lay down a proposition in general terms and leave its interpretation to individual judgment, while reserving the right to come down like a ton of bricks if that judgment is exercised wrongly.

Some say that it is impossible to be more specific. The Act does not share that view. It lays down a curious patchwork quilt of details and guidance. Under section 1, neglect is defined as failing to provide

"adequate food, clothing, medical aid or lodging."

There is no mention of care and supervision, even for a babe in arms.

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

Were the framers of the Act reluctant, perhaps, to distinguish between children of different ages under 16? That was not the case. Section 3 provides specifically that it is forbidden to take a child of four and over into a brothel. Section 5 forbids the giving of alcohol to a child under the age of five. Under section 8, a pawnbroker is forbidden from dealing with a person under 16. Most specific of all, section 11 makes it an offence to allow a child under the age of seven to be in a room with an unguarded fire, but only if the child is killed or seriously injured as a consequence. Are there not many other serious dangers in the houses of the 1980s? Must we wait for children to be killed or seriously injured? Surely the key is the need for supervision, at whatever age the law deems it necessary.

Parents need some clear, objective and practical guidelines on which they can rely. The law would back them when the kids argued that they were old enough to be left alone, but the parents rather doubt that. The law would be useful ammunition when an employee needs to take time off to look after an eight-year-old who is home because of illness, but the employer will not give permission. If we want clear and consistent standards that are fair to our children, surely it is our responsibility to establish a base for them.

I seek to highlight some of the inconsistencies and omissions in the present law. There will always be those who argue that we cannot set standards of behaviour by law, but that is not true. The legislation on the wearing of seat belts, for example, has manifestly saved many lives by changing behaviour patterns dramatically. Should we do less for our children?

I seek to bring an important area of law up to date to provide guidance to parents and to reflect changes in society in the last 50 years. I am not making detailed proposals on what that law should be, but merely raising the subject as a matter which is suitable for public debate. If, in so doing, we can save the life of one child burned to death in a fire from which a responsible adult could have saved him, is not that effort worthwhile? Is it not our duty to try?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Mr. Bruinvels.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is the convention of the House, as I am sure you are aware, for speakers to be called from either side——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is for the Chair to decide who will address the House.

2.21 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Child abuse is regarded by society as the most obscene of all offences, but it is a frightening fact that any parent—no matter the background from which that parent comes, be he or she rich or poor, kind or stable—can become a culprit.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) on initiating the debate, thereby doing a service not just to the House but to the country because far too many children are being abused nowadays. The problem is that parents do not see that they could become culprits. In most cases the parents concerned are under emotional stress or financial or physical stress——

Mr. Cohen: Caused by the actions of your Government.

Mr. Bruinvels: The father's job may be on the line or the house may be in need of urgent repair and there is not enough money available——

Mr. Cohen: Because of the policies of your Government.

Mr. Bruinvels: —and the child is considered to be in the way. The child perhaps does something wrong, and stresses are at a peak. The child, not the parents, then suffers. After hurting the child, the parent or parents need immediate help, though help is not sought in the vast majority of cases. People must be encouraged to get help prior to any further assault.

Mr. Cohen: They will not get much help from the Conservatives.

Mr. Bruinvels: They need to talk to people urgently. They need neighbours to come forward to help them.

Mr. Cohen: The lack of help is all due to cuts made by your Government.

Mr. Bruinvels: It is no good feeling remorse after the attack. They must seek help, and it is no embarrassment for them to seek it. Social workers have an even greater role to play.

This has been an excellent debate up to now in that hon. Members in all parts of the House have been united in considering this vital problem.

Mr. Cohen: Hon. Members are not united on many things, including unemployment.

Mr. Bruinvels: Social workers attempt to secure the removal of the child at the right time, when it is certain that the child is at risk. It may, however, be better to leave the child where it is, because it might do more harm than good to remove the child from its home at that time. The child's interests must always come first in all abuse cases.

Recent research has revealed that one in ten children in the United Kingdom suffer some form of sexual abuse before the age of 16. An article in the *Leicester Mercury* on Thursday 26 September last pointed out that the problem existed not just in Leicestershire and that it was growing at an alarming rate. It said:

"In Leicestershire, the problem is described by the experts as 'stable', but the County Council's register of children at risk shows 803 children in the firing line — 26 of whom are recognised as being at risk from sexual abuse. A further breakdown of the figures shows that 18 are living in the same household as a known child abuser, 53 are suffering from or are at risk from physical neglect, and 34 may be at risk of 'failing to thrive'—not putting on weight or growing healthily."

For that reason, the teacher's role must be understood, and it is a tragedy that the teachers' dispute should still be going on, for teachers can spot the problem in many instances. The teacher, on seeing bruises, can ask the child how they occurred.

Jesus said:

"Suffer the little children to come unto me",

but in 1985 we must ask how much the children are suffering and for how long they must suffer. We recall the cases of Heidi Koseda and Jasmine Beckford. It is a privilege, not a right, to have children. Many parents are emotionally unprepared to have children. It is often too easy to become pregnant. Indeed, some say that it is a good way for a young girl to leave school. I see the mother

in such a case as a child, but for her to become pregnant and to give birth to a child, with no back-up and no mothercraft experience, is often bound to lead to trouble. Many people have little time to attend child care centres for advice and counselling prior to giving birth.

It is exciting to be expecting a child, but mothers-to-be should be wary and cautious of life after the birth of their child. Childbirth and what it means thereafter should feature in the school curriculum. Having a child and rearing it will cramp the style of the parents. The child will expect 100 per cent. plus devotion and attention at all times. As a father-to-be, I appreciate fully the undertaking that I am entering into. It will not be so easy to go out in the evening. That applies to all potential parents. It will be very much more difficult for them to go to a disco or the theatre. There are bound to be money problems as a working couple readjust their financial arrangements, there being only one breadwinner instead of two. As the child grows up it will need comfort and love in ever-increasing quantities.

Rows may begin as the child keeps its parents awake during the night. It may be tempting for the working father to take it out on the child. He should remember that a child cannot fight back. That is where child abuse begins. If only the child could fight back and say, "Pick on someone your own size, you bully". Unfortunately, that is not possible.

A report appeared in the *Leicester Mercury* of a probation officer who basically saved the life of a five-year-old child, Nigel Vernon, who was being battered. The parents admitted assaulting him and occasioning actual bodily harm. The court was told that the doctor's examination revealed that Nigel had suffered extensive bruising to his face, head, arms, legs and genital area. He is a constituent of mine. Nigel's mother was put on probation for a year. The case was discovered only because a senior probation officer visited Nigel's home in March and noticed his injuries. The social services were informed and a place-of-safety order was sought immediately and obtained. That is a credit to the social services.

There are 6 million males under 16 years and 5¼ million females under 16. Marriages are breaking down all the time and 80,000 couples a year enter into marriage when one of the partners is under 20 years of age; 62,000 of them are girls. There are 93,200 children in care. That is a shocking figure. We must do everything in our power to look after these children. The House will be aware that 37 per cent. of married women under 20 years are divorced before they are 20. What happens to the children?

On 4 July I asked the former Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), who is now Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, what he intended to do in respect of the consultative paper which I asked him to produce, which I urged should contain new guidelines on follow-up action in cases of serious child abuse. The Government admit that these cases are distressing and that a great deal of care is needed. All cases must be thoroughly investigated. The most immediate need is for local management. Responsibility should be local. We are looking forward to hearing the changes that are proposed in procedures and services.

School teachers have an important role. They should ask questions if a child is a regular late arriver. They should take note of his appearance and ask themselves whether he has been assaulted at home. There must be liaison between the schools and the social workers. In 1984, 20,000 children left home. Fortunately, most of them turned up eventually.

On 18 September 1985 Viscount Tonypandy said:

> "But today, because of new dangers, the exploitation of children is still widespread. Even within the family we have children being used consciously and unconsciously as pawns in the struggles between parents.
>
> With rapidly rising divorce rates youngsters can face the pain and humiliation of seeing their parents with a confusing succession of partners or spouses."

It is always the children who suffer.

I asked my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 14 January about co-ordination between the Home Office and the Department of Health and Social Security to ensure that probation officers or childminders who have had a problem or a criminal record are discovered at an early stage. I am pleased to say that there is co-ordination. I, too, want the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 to be withdrawn or amended so that if someone has a record of offences against children he or she will not be allowed to become a childminder, probation officer or social officer. Such individuals must be properly trained as well as properly vetted. The Government have said that crimes against children are viewed with the utmost concern. Senior officers share that view and respond to such offences accordingly.

In 1984, 10 children were stolen. There were 102 instances of cruelty or neglect. That is a shocking figure. Acts of gross indecency were committed against 226 children in 1984.

We must act quickly. It is not a matter of admitting defeat by calling for fostering. We must encourage people to foster. We must get the neighbours to help. If they spot a problem, they must declare it. A child is private property, but it may need help. I should like a central record to be kept of all child abuse victims. Responsibility for protection from abuse lies with——

It being half past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Health Services (North-East Essex)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

2.30 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the subject of health services in north-east Essex, especially at this time. Strong feelings have been aroused in my constituency about the threatened closure of a small children's ward and a proposal to shut a radiotherapy unit and a medical rehabilitation centre. I am concerned because these actions led to the Health Service being given a bad name, because a new general hospital has been built and considerable extensions are planned for the main hospital in my constituency.

We all know the expression, "spoiling the ship for a ha'porth of tar." I call this "spoiling the good name of the Health Service for the lack of even a penny'sworth of political sense." We need care, not management consultants. What is the use of spending all these millions of pounds on new hospitals and ruining it all by closing down such a small, valuable children's ward and two other valuable units?

Yesterday, I received a letter from one of my constituents showing a very human reaction. He commented on a pamphlet issued by the health authority entitled, "Clacton Coastline — a real community hospital." My constituent said:

"We are a community. We have our young. We have our middle-aged and elderly as well as our psychiatric and mentally handicapped. In times of illness, we all need treatment and care as near to our homes as possible."

I stress the words

"as near to our homes as possible."

It is all very well having grandiose hospitals 20 or 30 miles away, where excellent treatment can be given, but it is important to ensure that the treatment and care provided are as near as possible to the people needing the care. Just to show how cynical one's constituents become, my constituent states in a postscript:

"Does the leaflet contravene the Trades Description Act?"

It is a shame that the good name of the Health Service is ruined by such actions by the health authority. Those actions have made it a million times more difficult to get over to the people what is being done to improve the Health Service locally and nationally.

We welcome the opening of the new general hospital in Colchester. We welcome the develoment at Clacton hospital in 1986, which will include an additional ward, day hospital places for psychiatric and psychogeriatric patients and an improved X-ray service. We welcome the promise to build phase 2 of the Clacton hospital extension which will provide 50 badly needed beds for the elderly. I have pressed for that extension for a considerable time.

In spite of the improvements, we are considering cuts in these sensitive areas. Why? Strong feelings have been aroused among more than 500 people who, last Saturday, marched against these closures. I know that 500 people in East Anglia do not take to the streets unless they feel strongly about something. Twenty three thousand people have signed the petition against the closure, and there are 13,000 signatures against the threatened closure of the radiotherapy unit at Colchester. We are to face cuts in three areas: the children's ward, the Passmore Edwards medical rehabilitation centre in Clacton, and, possibly, the radiotherapy unit at Colchester, which will follow soon after the opening of the new district hospital. That would mean that patients must travel to Chelmsford.

During the past few years Clacton has also seen the closure of the Middlesex convalescent home and the maternity home, while, at the same time, there has been the acceptance of greater responsibility within the community for the care of the mentally retarded. All have resulted in considerable savings for the local health authority

Directly I heard about the threatened closure of the children's ward I asked the north-east Essex health authority to withdraw the proposal. There is a conflict of medical opinion, but I have had the full backing of general practitioners and the Clacton hospital throughout the dispute. Again this week I asked the authority to give way, but again it refused. As the authority has refused twice, and bearing in mind the petitions and marches, I hope that the authority will put the case to the Minister for his decision.

Three years ago, when we agreed to the closure of the maternity home, we reached a compromise by accepting that the children's ward in Clacton hospital should be turned into a maternity ward, and that a place should be found for a children's ward of six beds. Despite accepting that agreement, the health authority is adamant that it now wants to close the ward. Is it not understandable that strong feelings and local anger have been aroused by the decision? If adequate research had been carried out, we would not have had any of the trouble, and, more particularly, the unnecessary anxiety placed on the seriously ill. People with cancer have enough to contend with, without all the worry and extra burden of having to travel long distances for treatment.

I do not believe that the local health authority realises that 46 per cent. of householders in Clacton are without transport, or is aware of the distances that must be covered to the nearest district hospital.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Everyone in Essex and East Anglia is grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the matter. I hope that he will stress that the arrangements for the treatment of cancer are still at a consultative stage, and that he, like me, will have been sending large numbers of letters and making representations about it.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: My hon. and learned Friend, like all of us, takes a great interest in health facilities in north-east Essex. I agree that the arrangements are at a consultative stage, but I do not think that the authorities realise the difficulties that arise from announcing consultation. Good government flourishes in the dark. It is far better to have consultation between the people who must make the decisions without making it public. A great deal of worry has been caused by that not being the case.

Many cancer patients must rely on public transport to take them to their radiotherapy centre. The extra miles to Chelmsford will place an additional burden on an already overstretched ambulance service, just as it will if the children's ward is closed, and all young patients are sent to Colchester. It would also be difficult and expensive for young mums to get to the new hospital to visit their children.

Regarding the proposed closure of the Passmore Edwards medical rehabilitation centre, the district should develop its own facilities, but that will take about five years. Until then I am against the closure.

In short, we feel that we have been treated unfairly by these threatened closures. If more money must be found for north-east Essex, let me make some suggestions where we may be able to find it.

I fear that as long as north-east Essex stays in the north-east Thames regional health authority, we shall not get a fair deal. We would be far better off, and our problems far better understood, if we were in the East Anglia health authority. How can an authority that deals with the problems of London understand the problems of the country districts? The health problems of an urban area are entirely different from those in country areas. The problem of distances is not understood. That is one reason for the difficulty that we are having in north-east Essex.

North-east Essex is the worst funded region in the north-east Thames region. We are not getting our fair share of the region's revenue. I draw the Minister's attention to the performance indicators taken from the *Health and Social Service Journal* of 26 September 1985, of which I have sent him a copy. Our performance indicator shows north-east Essex at 82, while the London boroughs are double that figure, with Islington at 194. Will Ministers keep up their pressure in their reviews of the Thames region to accelerate a redistribution within the region? Will they please take a far tougher line with London and speed up the process of shifting resources to Essex? I hope that the Minister, in his reply, will tell us what action has been taken to see that a much more fair redistribution takes place.

Will the Minister also deal with the more equitable redistribution of national health resources? The authority claims that it is all very well to achieve equity at a faster speed when there is adequate growth, but where there is a modest amount of cash a redistribution has become far more difficult. It claims that that has resulted in a real cut in the region of 0·3 per cent. It goes on to say that, when it takes into account the fact that, due to increasing numbers of elderly persons and advancing technology, 1 per cent. growth is needed merely to stand still, the financial problems become real indeed. Will the Minister comment on that?

The second national problem, and a more difficult one that affects us, is the shortfall in pay awards. Is the funding of the health authority, allowing for 4·5 per cent. inflation, adequate, bearing in mind that major groups have reached the pay norm? This is costing £350,000 in the current year and will cost £1·2 million next year if the gap is not met. Unless that is sorted out quickly the health authority tells me that next year planning will become difficult.

I hope that as a result of what I have said my hon. Friend will be sympathetic to the problems that we face and understand the reasons for the strong feelings that exist. We must find a fair solution to those problems and not spoil the good name of our National Health Service, of which we have good reason to be proud.

Again, I underline that we are just not getting our fair share from the north-east Thames regional health authority. I ask my hon. Friend to press the north-east Thames authority, which, after all, considers London as its major objective, to see that we get our fair share of funds. We have made our sacrifices, but it is up to the authority now to do what it can to help with the small sums of revenue that these closures entail. I am sure that it could easily afford it if it got the redistribution right.

2.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am grateful for this opportunity to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale). I am particularly happy to note that also present in the Chamber are my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham) and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck). Like my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich, my right hon. and hon. and learned Friends take a close interest in the health affairs of their constituencies and the health authority of north-east Essex. I am, as I say, particularly grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich for giving me this opportunity of seeking, I hope successfully, to allay his concerns.

My hon. Friend was kind enough to refer to the good name of the NHS and to some of its splendid achievements nationally and locally in north-east Essex. He will be aware that since we came to office the real funds available to the NHS have increased by 20 per cent. Only two weeks ago, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a further increase for next year of 6·7 per cent. in the funds voted to the NHS. Added to that is the new look, post-Griffiths spirit of the better use of these truly vast resources which is delivering better health care in Britain. One manifestation of that was the opening of the new 280-bed Colchester district general hospital earlier this year, at a cost of £16 million. The need for a new hospital in that part of Essex was long recognised, and the hospital represents a major improvement in the health services available to all the residents of the district and to the constituents of my hon. Friends who are present in the Chamber today.

However, that is not the whole story. Other good news items include the developments in Clacton. I understand that a 28-bed geriatric ward, a rehabilitation department and a 30-place psychiatric and psycho-geriatric day hospital will open in the new year, and that two further 28-bed geriatric wards will be completed by 1988. That shows the health authority's commitment to developing services in what we regard as the priority groups: the elderly, the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped. There are many elderly people in my hon. Friend's constituency.

My hon. Friend mentioned three specific proposals. May I say at once that they are only proposals, and quite right too. The NHS is an open and consultative body. Although my hon. Friend suggested that he would have welcomed proposals which gave less cause for concern, even he might react strongly should that health authority present a fait accompli in any area. We are proud of our consultative process, although we recognise that it can be abused by creating anxiety and alarm which may prove to be unnecessary. It is incumbent on those of us who recognise the achievements of the NHS to allay that anxiety and to resist the occasional hysteria and grave anxiety that are sometimes created. Obviously, I shall make no direct comment on feelings in my hon. Friend's constituency, since they are for him to judge.

I shall consider the three proposals, leaving aside the financial pressures, because it is important to understand that they were made for non-financial reasons. The

[Mr. Ray Whitney]

authority proposed them in terms of providing a better service for patients. It is true that if one or two of them are implemented, they will save money, but any money saved would be reinvested in further patient services or would help to fund other developments. It is not for me at this stage to pronounce on the validity of the better service argument, but it is important for us to recognise that the proposals were promoted in that spirit.

The proposals raise questions that are not unique to the north-east Essex district authority or to the north-east Thames region. There is the general question of where to locate services in a district that has many large population centres. We all accept that we cannot provide all facilities in all towns. It would make neither medical nor economic sense. Therefore, judgments have to be made, difficult decisions have to be reached and the right balance struck. The objective of our consultation process is to ensure that in each instance that judgment is right.

My hon. Friends will be aware that the closure of the children's ward at Clacton hospital is out for local consultation and comments have been invited to be in by 15 January. Should the community health council, which formally represents the views of the local community, object, while the district wishes to proceed, the proposal will be referred to the regional health authority. If it agrees, the matter will then come to Ministers. My hon. Friend will recognise that it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the substance of the proposal at this stage.

I understand that the health authority believes that children requiring admission to hospital will receive a better service if they are looked after in the paediatric wards at Colchester general hospital, where specialist facilities in terms of nursing and medical manpower, with supplementary facilities, are immediately available 24 hours a day. With children, that is particularly important. The considerations in this proposal are service ones, hoping to achieve the best use of resources and an arrangement that does not dilute the experience needed to develop good expertise.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Does my hon. Friend recognise that the general practitioners are locally in dispute over the medical opinion of the health authority?

Mr. Whitney: I am aware of that, and it is by no means unique that there is a division between professional opinion, whether clinical or economic. It is not uncommon for those who work at a hospital to defend its existence. Many factors need to be taken into account, and one is the point made by my hon. Friend—the distance of the new general district hospital from Clacton. I am certain that the district health authority will take careful account of the points made by my hon. Friend.

The second point concerns the proposed closure of the radiotherapy unit at Essex county hospital in Colchester. Again, this report is out for consultation and, for the same reasons, it would not be appropriate for me to comment. However, as there has been much misreporting on this, one point needs to be made clear. The proposal does not stem from a desire to save money. The purpose of the review is to determine what sort of cancer services—not just radiotherapy—the region should be providing.

I believe that the report argues the case for concentrating services, including radiotherapy, into specialised centres to improve the quality of the service to patients. It also argues that the present nine radiotherapy centres should be reduced to five, one at each of the proposed cancer treatment centres. Again, it would be up to the regional health authority to weigh up all the arguments at the end of the consultation period. I stress that this proposal has not been instigated out of a desire or a need to save money.

The third point is the closure of the Passmore Edwards medical rehabilitation centre in Clacton. This proposal is also out for consultation and, therefore, my position is the same as it is on the other two issues. Here again, the reasons for the proposal are not financial. In this case, the health authority's argument is that the main rehabilitation centre is best located as part of the district general hospital services in Colchester, where new rehabilitation facilities are already available, both at the hospital and the other major department, St. Mary's hospital, which is undergoing major improvement.

For Clacton, as for Harwich and Halstead hospitals, the proposal is that they will provide comprehensive out-patient and day-patient support. I understand that substantial improvements in the rehabilitation facilities are taking place at the Clacton and district hospital. This is a national trend. It is based upon the most modern and up-to-date judgments about the most appropriate clinical practice. However, it is entirely right that this should be a matter for consultation. The service to the public is the paramount criterion.

My hon. Friend referred to the financial issues. He knows that the aim of the resource allocation working party is a steady equalisation towards a more equitable distribution of health services across the country to meet local needs. Thereby we hope to correct the historic imbalance of services that has favoured London and the south-east at the expense of the rest of the country. The Conservative party made a firm manifesto commitment to that process.

North-east Thames still receives more than its fair share of the available resources. The pace of change is crucial. It must be carefully balanced. It must not take place too quickly, thereby creating unacceptable damage in London. However, we must move as quickly as we can towards the abolition of inequity.

It is important for north-east Essex to keep the matter in perspective. The rate of change must be measured. It was not until 1985-86 that the north-east Thames region started the year with an increase in its allocation that was below the forecast rate of inflation. It was given notice of this change through its forward planning assumption, to allow it time to adapt its plans. It has also been able to develop substantial cost improvements in patient care, even within a static or decreasing budget.

My hon. Friend made a bid for the transfer of north-east Essex out of the north-east Thames regional health authority and into the East Anglian regional health authority. I do not believe that north-east Essex is getting a raw deal from the north-east Thames regional health authority. It has benefited enormously in recent years from being in that region. I recognise that each district is rightly concerned about the needs of its local population. However, the north-east Thames regional health authority is sensitive to the requirements to which my hon. Friend referred. The chairmen of the regional health authorities discuss this point regularly with the Department.

My hon. Friend said that north-east Essex has one of the lowest levels of acute spending per head of population. He referred to certain statistics. However, those statistics were overtaken by the new district general hospital that was opened this year and by the increased revenue allocation. There was a real terms increase of 6·3 per cent. between 1982-83 and 1984-85.

We shall continue to watch carefully the development of the balance, but redistribution must be carried out at a manageable pace. While the acute services in the London region are rationalised, we must make available the resources that are needed in other regions, including my hon. Friend's region.

Our decision to implement the recommendations of the 1985 pay review body was taken with great care. Our judgment was that a total cost of £240 million could be contained in a year in which allocations would increase by over £500 million, with about £150 million being released through cost improvement programmes. In the financial year 1986-87 there is to be a 6·7 per cent. rise over spending in 1985-86. This has to be set against the forecast of a general inflation rate in 1986-87 of 4·5 per cent. One has to add to that the benefits of the authorities' growing cost improvement programmes. In north-east Essex, as elsewhere, the Government's record of diverting public resources to health provision is good. It is a record of which we can be proud. I hope that my hon. Friend shares that view.

The Question having been proposed at half-past Two o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18 November 1985

PRIME MINISTER

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept on individuals by the Cabinet Office and staff of 10 Downing Street; and if she will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

The Prime Minister: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in 'Protection of Information in Computer Systems' and 'Central Government Code of Practice No. 21', issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the Library.

Access to manual files is restricted to nominated staff appointed to designated posts in the Cabinet Office and 10 Downing Street.

State Opening of Parliament

Mr. Adams asked the Prime Minister what was the cost to public funds of the State opening of Parliament on 6 November.

The Prime Minister: I will reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

Clinical Academic Staff

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with co-ordination between the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Social Services on the implementation of the 1985 pay award for clinical academic staff; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science will reply as soon as possible to the request from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals for additional funds to allow the universities to apply to clinical academics the 1985 pay award for NHS doctors and dentists.

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. Rooker asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply on 14 November, if she will make a statement about the use of the Secretary of State's powers in section 62 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 in respect of tenant management housing co-operatives; and how much money will be lost by affected co-operatives.

The Prime Minister: The Secretary of State for the Environment has power under section 93 of the Finance Act 1965 (which will be supplanted by section 62 of the Housing Associations Act 1985 on commencement of that Act on 1 April 1986) to make grants to compensate certain housing associations for tax they have paid.

Tenant management co-operatives which are registered housing associations, and which are operating under agreements, approved by the Secretary of State, with local authorities, are in principle eligible for a section 93 grant. The position on a small number of applications made by tenant management co-operatives and rejected by the Secretary of State is being urgently reviewed.

Judges

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Prime Minister how many Royal Commissions and major departmental committees have been chaired by judges since 1969; and in each case who was the judge and what was the subject of inquiry.

The Prime Minister: Since 1969, four Royal Commissions, set up by Royal Warrants signed by the Home Secretary, have been chaired in whole or in part by serving judges. They are as follows:

Royal Commission	*Judge*	*Established*	*Reported*
The Constitution	Lord Kilbrandon	1969	1973
Civil liability and compensation for personal injury	Lord Pearson	1973	1978
The Press	Mr. Justice Finer	1974	1977
Standards of conduct in public life	Lord Salmon	1974	1976

Information on Departmental committees is not collected centrally.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Ethnic Minorities (Swann Report)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he has taken in the light of the Swann report on the education of ethnic minorities.

Mr. Chris Patten: Action is continuing on the various initiatives described by my right hon. Friend in his response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) on 17 July 1985. In particular comments have been received on the consultation paper inviting views on the possible reasons for the apparent under-representation of ethnic minorities in the teaching force and on ways of countering this. These comments are being considered, as are also comments on the consultation paper concerning the collection of statistics on the ethnic origins of school teachers and students in teacher training.

A working group is being established, to consider the collection of statistics on teachers in the first instance. The

working group on the collection of ethnically-based statistics on school pupils is continuing its work, with the aim of submitting a report by the end of the year.

In August local education authorities were invited to submit proposals for projects to be supported through education support grants in 1986-87 (in addition to those so supported which are due to begin in 1985-86) on the response of the education system to ethnic diversity. More than 150 proposals from 67 local education authorities were received and are now being considered with a view to supporting in 1986-87 the start of a second tranche of projects costing around £1 million a year.

My right hon. Friend has decided, after discussion with the local authority associations, that the in-service teacher training grants scheme should be extended from 1986-87 to include training dealing with the need to respond to ethnic diversity. Amendments to the regulations will be brought before the House shortly. My right hon. Friend has also written to the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education drawing attention to those of the criteria for the approval of initial teacher training courses which bear on the response to ethnic diversity and to the Swann committee's recommendations that all teacher training students should have an opportunity to gain teaching experience in a multi-racial school.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate is continuing to encourage good practice in teaching English as a second language and mother tongue teaching. An HMI conference on the teaching of mother tongues in September was attended by chief education officers and others. As regards examinations, syllabuses for the new GCSE examinations are being prepared. They will conform to the requirements of the national criteria that examining groups should ensure that syllabuses and examinations are free of ethnic bias, and should bear in mind the linguistic and cultural diversity of our society.

Student Support

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will express the resources made available for student support as a proportion of total public expenditure on higher education in the United States of America, France, West Germany and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: Valid international comparisons of education expenditure are difficult to make. However the available information, drawn mainly from UNESCO sources, is as follows:

Country	*Date of Information*	*HE student support as a percentage of all HE public sector current expenditure*
United States of America	1979	3·9
France	1980	4·6
	1981	4·9
West Germany	1980	16·2
United Kingdom	1980	19·5
	1983	20·8

Notes:
(1) The student support systems of the above countries vary and involve grants or loans, or a combination of the two.
(2) The way in which educational expenditure is allocated to the different sectors of education varies both between countries and within countries over time, thus making comparisons difficult.

High Energy Particle Physics

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, in view of the evidence from the Advisory Board for Research Councils on the drain of scientists away from centres of excellence in the United Kingdom, what he estimates will be the effect on high energy particle physics following the reduction of the United Kingdom's subscription to CERN.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend is still considering the advice he has received from the ABRC and the SERC on the recommendation of the Kendrew review group that the United Kingdom should continue its membership of CERN beyond 1989 only if this can be achieved at a significantly lower cost. My right hon. Friend will take into account all the implications of accepting the recommendation before any decision is made on whether to reduce the United Kingdom's subscription to CERN.

Scientists (Emigration)

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what particular steps he now proposes to take to arrest the science brain drain from the United Kingdom, in the light of the recent Advisory Board for Research Councils' report on the subject;

(2) what particular steps he proposes to take to seek to reduce the migration of talent in chemistry to the United States of America;

(3) what particular steps he proposes to take to seek to persuade very able scientists in biochemistry and molecular biology from migrating abroad.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend intends to add £45 million to the science budget compared with previous plans over the three years 1986-87 to 1988-89. My right hon. Friend also intends to increase the amount available to the University Grants Committee for the improvement of equipment in selected centres of research from £7 million to £10 million in each of the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88 and to make the same provision in 1988-89. The additions to the science budget will be distributed following advice from the ABRC; the UGC will be responsible for distributing the selective equipment funds. My right hon. Friend hopes that together the additional provisions will provide more opportunities and better facilities for talented scientists — chemists, biochemists, molecular biologists and others—to pursue their work in this country.

Departmental Files (Access)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Sir Keith Joseph: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House Library.

A written record is maintained of all staff to whom manual files kept on individuals are referred.

Undergraduate Statistics

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has as to how many first-year undergraduates with solely Scottish Examination Board qualifications were admitted to universities in England and Wales in the academic year *(a)* 1984-85 and *(b)* 1985-86;

(2) what information he has as to how many first-year undergraduates were admitted to each of the Scottish universities with only English GCE qualifications.

Mr. Brooke: The available information for fulltime undergraduates paying home fees entering in 1983 (the latest year for which information is available) is as follows.

	Main entry qualification			
	SCE	*GCE*	*Other*	*Total*
Universities in England and Wales	520	54,378	5,959	60,857
Universities in Scotland	7,353	2,135	943	10,431

Information on each of the Scottish universities is not readily available.

University Entrance Qualifications

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the universities in England and Wales which do not recognise *(a)* the Scottish Certificate of Education higher grade certificates and *(b)* the Scottish Examination Board certificate of sixth year studies qualification for purposes of university entrance qualifications.

Mr. Brooke: All universities in England and Wales are prepared to consider applications from Scottish candidates offering passes gained in the examination for the Scottish certificate of education (SCE) or in the certificate of sixth year studies (CSYS) in lieu of GCE ordinary (grades A, B or C) and advanced level passes. However, the conditions on which these qualificatins are accepted vary from university to university.

The Compendium of University Entrance Requirements 1986-87, appendix 1, lists the specific conditions imposed by individual universities for candidates with SCE or CSYS. A copy of this publication is available in the Library.

Expenditure

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what will be the percentage change in constant prices of expenditure on education and on higher or further education, in particular, between 1978-79 and 1986-87.

Sir Keith Joseph: After adjusting for the transfer to the Manpower Services Commission in 1986-87 of funding of £105 million for some work-related non-advanced further education the information is as follows.

£ million at 1984-85 prices

	1978-79	*1986-87*
Total expenditure on education	13,222	12,491
of which:		
Higher and further education	3,920	3,892

In real terms (as measured by the GDP deflator) planned expenditure for education as a whole is 5·5 per cent. lower, and for higher and further education is less than 1 per cent. lower, in 1986-87 than outturn in 1978-79.

Over three quarters of total expenditure on education is current expenditure by local authorities. Planned expenditure in 1986-87 must be seen in the context of the continuing fall in pupil numbers—estimated at about 16 per cent. over the same period—and the need for local authorities to review those aspects of their provision which offer the prospect of efficiency savings.

Nursery Schools

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of nursery schools in England in 1984.

Mr. Dunn: In England in January 1984 there were 565 maintained nursery schools.

School Closures

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many proposals for school closures were *(a)* approved and *(b)* refused in 1984 for (i) first, (ii) junior, (iii) middle and (iv) secondary schools.

Mr. Dunn: Details are shown in the table, which also gives the numbers of school closure proposals determined by local education authorities in accordance with section 12(7) of the Education Act 1980. Separate records are not kept for junior school proposals: these are included in the figures for primary schools.

School closure proposals 1984

Approved by the Secretary of State	*Determined by LEAs*	*Rejected by the Secretary of State*
(i) *First Schools*		
18(25)	1(1)	—
(ii) *Primary Schools* (Excluding First Schools)		
102(118)	31(36)	12(12)
(iii) *Middle Schools*		
17(19)	4(4)	1(1)
(iv) *Secondary Schools*		
36(51)	5(5)	5(7)

Note: The first figure in each case is the number of proposals; and the figure in brackets is the number of schools.

Science Students

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of science students who were awarded a first degree in 1979 and each of the subsequent years for which statistics are available *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of all students awarded a first degree.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows

	Great Britain—Thousands				
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Science first degree graduates*	17·0	17·5	19·0	19·7	20·4

	Great Britain—Thousands				
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
As a percentage of all first degree graduates	20	19	20	20	20

* Excluding engineering; technology; agriculture and medicine.

Notes

DES estimates based on data from the Universities Statistical Record and the CNAA.

Degrees awarded in public sector institutions but validated by Universities are excluded.

Engineering and Technology Programme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total amount of money afforded to universities and polytechnics, respectively, under the engineering and technology programme; which universities and which polytechnics will benefit or have benefited; and by what amount in each case.

Mr. Brooke: Of the £43 million in total made available under phases 1 and 2 of this programme, £35·4 million has been allocated for 30 universities which are funded through the University Grants Committee; £5·7 million in total for eight polytechnics; and £0·5 million for Cranfield institute of technology. (These totals include sums in respect of student awards). The Open university has been allocated £1·4 million.

The final detail of funding to all individual institutions over the three years of the programme is yet to be settled. Allocations under phase 2 of the programme are also provisional pending the receipt of information from institutions concerning additional industrial support made available to them.

Details of the institutions to be included in the Programme were published in the Department's press notices No. 83/85 and 249/85. I am sending copies to the hon. Member and placing further copies in the Library.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the intended unit of resource per student in the university and polytechnic sector, respectively, and as an average for both under the engineering and technology programme.

Mr. Brooke: Resources under the engineering and technology programme have been allocated on the basis of competitive bids from individual higher education institutions. The unit of resource per student place will hence vary according to the circumstances of the individual institution concerned.

Correspondence

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what date the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen can expect to receive a reply to his letter of 8 August about the Wessex institute of technology.

Mr. Brooke: I apologise to my hon. Friend about the substantial delay in replying to his letter of 8 August about the Wessex institute of technology. I have replied to him today, on behalf of my right hon. Friend.

ENERGY

NCB (Extraction Policy)

21. **Sir Dudley Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of the National Coal Board over future strategy for coal extraction.

Mr. David Hunt: The National Coal Board sees its future strategy for coal extraction as related to the industry's need to produce coal for the market at competitive prices.

Energy Efficiency Demonstration Scheme

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many applications have been received under the energy efficiency demonstration scheme in each year of its existence; how many were successful in each year; and if he will break down the totals into the following categories: *(a)* domestic buildings sector, *(b)* non-domestic building sector, *(c)* all the United Kingdom and *(d)* Scotland only.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is as follows:

Year	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Number of proposals formally submitted under the energy efficiency demonstration scheme (formerly the energy conservation demonstration projects scheme)							
United Kingdom	11	42	51	106	81	53	56
Scotland	1	5	5	6	5	2	4
Domestic buildings sector	0	1	1	7	6	3	4
Non-domestic buildings sector	1	2	9	31	27	11	20
Number of projects offered grant assistance							
United Kingdom	10	25	41	87	67	42	47
Scotland	1	3	4	5	5	2	2
Domestic buildings sector	0	1	1	5	5	0	2
Non-domestic building sector	1	1	9	22	23	11	19

British National Oil Corporation

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has yet appointed a date for the transfer to the Oil and Pipelines Agency of the property rights and liabilities of the British National Oil Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Pursuant to section 3(1) of the Oil and Pipelines Act 1985 I made, on 15 November, the Oil and Pipelines Act 1985 (Appointed Day) Order 1985 (S.I. No 1749) appointing the 1 December 1985 as the date on which the property, rights and liabilities of BNOC are to be transferred to the Oil and Pipelines Agency. The order has the effect of bringing into force section 3, schedule 2 and part I of schedule 4 to the Act.

I also made on 15 November the Oil and Pipelines Act 1985 (Commencement) Order 1985 (S.I. No 1748) (c. 41) appointing 1 December 1985 as the date on which all other provisions of the Act are to come into force with the exception of the repeals set out in part II of schedule 4 to the Act which will take effect on the dissolution of BNOC.

Council of Energy Ministers

Mr. Lester asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the meeting of the European Community's Council of Energy Ministers on 11 November.

Mr. Peter Walker: I represented the United Kingdom at the Energy Ministers' Council on 11 November.

I am pleased to say that the Council agreed to extend by six months the present decision governing the payment of aids by member states to their coal industries, which was due to expire at the end of this year. This extension will allow proper time for a discussion of the Commission's proposals for a new regime governing state aids to the coal industry. Agreement was also reached to continue sales aid for coking coal until the end of 1986 at a reduced quantity of 8·5 million tonnes.

The Council discussed the need for a further transfer of additional support for social measures resulting from the restructuring of the coal industry, and the question of making resources available for this purpose was remitted for further consideration.

There was another discussion of the proposed Community energy objectives for 1985. It was accepted that the objectives should in principle be expressed in qualitative terms but that they could also incorporate some illustrative quantification. Detailed consideration of the objectives will continue.

Ministers returned to the issue of refining and trade in oil products. Commissioner Mosar undertook to monitor the progress of the measures recently announced by Japan to open her markets to refined products. He will be visiting Japan in December to emphasise the importance the Community attaches to this question.

The Council approved final texts of the regulations extending for another four years the Community's schemes for aiding energy demonstration projects and projects to develop new technologies in the hydrocarbons sector. A directive governing the use of substitute fuels in petrol was also agreed.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Building Industry (Crime Prevention)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice on crime prevention his Department gives to the building industry.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office crime prevention centre provides expert advice on how buildings and construction sites may be made more secure. In addition, at the instigation of the Home Office, the British Standards Institution has prepared a guide on the security of dwellings. This is expected to be published in February and will provide specific guidance on security measures which can be incorporated in a range of new and existing dwellings.

Refugees

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken to process applications for refugee status.

Mr. Waddington: On the information available, it is estimated that 50 per cent. of applications decided in the first nine months of this year were completed within about 13 months of application.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average population of Wandsworth prison in the week ended 2 November or any other recent typical week.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985 the population of Wandsworth prison was about 1,550. Average weekly populations are not recorded centrally.

Wormwood Scrubs Prison

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average population of Wormwood Scrubs prison in the week ended 2 November or any other recent typical week.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October the population of Wormwood Scrubs prison was about 1,370. Average weekly populations are not recorded centrally.

Special Nationality Inquiries Unit

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff have been assigned to the special nationality inquiries unit at Lunar House; how many inquiries they have carried out; and how many inquiries they expect to handle between now and the end of the current year.

Mr. Waddington: There are ten staff in the naturalisation inquiry unit, of whom eight conduct interviews. From 9 April to 31 October 1,238 interviews were conducted. It is estimated that from 1 November to 31 December 1985 a further 350 interviews will be conducted.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Metropolitan police advocating more police officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend met the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on 16 October, when he put forward his view that the force required additional manpower.

Leoni Price

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with the arrangements for liaison between the police forces engaged on investigations into the murder of Leoni Price at Barton Mills, Suffolk.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As I explained in my reply to my hon. Friend's question on 25 October, full liaison exists

between Suffolk, Norfolk and Essex police with additional assistance from other forces to computerise the investigation incident room. Detective Chief Superintendent Shields of Suffolk constabulary, who is in overall command of the enquiry, has received training in the handling of investigations of this kind, developed following the Byford review of the 'Yorkshire Ripper' investigation.

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Hurd: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the Library.

The control and routing of manual files within the Department conform with generally recognised and accepted service-wide procedures for the safeguarding of personally sensitive and confidential information.

Winson Green Prison

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baths, showers and toilets are available to *(a)* convicted prisoners and *(b)* prisoners on remand at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, Birmingham; how many baths or showers each prisoner is allowed each week; and how many changes of top and underclothes each prisoner is allowed weekly.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of baths, showers and toilets available are as follows:

	Convicted prisoners	*Remand prisoners*
Baths	35	3
Showers	56	7
WCs	101	25
Urinals	73	16

Each prisoner is normally allowed one bath or shower per week and an additional shower when he makes use of the gymnasium. In addition, prisoners employed on jobs that are of a physically dirty nature have a shower each day, as do prisoners returning from court appearance.

Prisoners at Birmingham have one change of clothes per week consisting of two shirts, two pairs of socks, two pairs of underpants, two vests and one T-shirt. Overclothing is changed as necessary but on return from court, prisoners receive a full kit of clean clothes. In addition two towels, one sheet and one pillow case are changed weekly and a full set of bedding is available to prisoners on return from court.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space is available to prisoners at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, Birmingham; and for how many hours each day it was used by *(a)* convicted prisoners and *(b)* prisoners on remand in the week ended 2 November.

Mr. Mellor: Birmingham prison has available 46,000 square feet in exercise yards and 8,500 square feet in the gymnasium. In the week ending 2 November 1985 the various exercise yards were in use for two to three hours a day and all prisoners had at least one hour and more normally two hours exercise each day. Information on the use of the gymnasium is available only in the form of total inmate hours per day as follows.

	Hours
27 October	91
28 October	113
29 October	82
30 October	107
31 October	160
1 November	65
2 November	111

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the daily population of *(a)* convicted prisoners, *(b)* remand prisoners and *(c)* prisoners awaiting sentence at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, Birmingham, in the week ended 2 November.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985 there were about 340 untried prisoners, 60 convicted unsentenced prisoners and 500 sentenced prisoners in Birmingham prison. Average weekly populations are not recorded centrally.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners who can be employed on any one day in workshops at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, Birmingham; and how many prison officers and instructors are needed to make maximum use of workshop facilities.

Mr. Mellor: There are two heavy textile workshops and a laundry at Birmingham prison which can employ a maximum of 157 inmates. The authorised complement of instructors provides for two senior officer instructors and seven instructors, of which one senior officer instructor and four instructors are currently in post. A total of four prison officers are required daily to provide security cover.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the week ending 2 November workshops at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, Birmingham, were open; what was the average daily number of prisoners employed; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of prisoners in each class; and how many individual prisoners attended at least one class during the week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November one of the two workshops at Birmingham prison was closed. The other was open for 10 hours employing 39 prisoners and the laundry was open for 25 hours and employed 22 prisoners. In addition 60 prisoners were regularly employed on catering, stores and maintenance duties with others employed on cleaning duties. There were no classes during the week ended 2 November because of the half-term break.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much time each day *(a)* convicted prisoners and *(b)* prisoners on remand spent in their cells

at Her Majesty's prison, Winson Green, Birmingham, in the week ended 2 November; and how this compares with the same period one and two years earlier.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November, convicted prisoners at Winson Green prison who were in employment spent up to seventeen and a half hours each working day in their cells; unemployed convicted prisoners and those on remand were in their cells up to twenty two and a half hours. In both cases these hours were reduced for some prisoners by visits, interviews, court appearances, use of the prison library and canteen, and other out of cell activities for periods which it is not practicable to calculate.

This information shows little change from the position which existed in the same period in 1983 and 1984.

Mrs. Margaret Livesey

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes in the case of Mrs. Margaret Livesey, in the light of the memorandum submitted to him in July 1985 by the standing committee on miscarriages of justice.

Mr. Mellor: Following receipt of the memorandum my right hon. Friend directed that the entire case be re-examined by officials in the light of the issues which it raised. The hon. Member subsequently made further representations and the examination is continuing. We shall write to the hon. Member and to the chairman of the standing committee of 'Justice' as soon as we can.

Docklands Policing Secretariat

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is, by rank, the number of Metropolitan police personnel attached to the Docklands policing secretariat.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The secretariat consists of one full-time executive officer with the part time assistance of a clerical assistant.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what effect the existence of the Docklands policing secretariat will have on the reorganisation of the Metropolitan police districts.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None.

Leeds Prison

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baths, showers and toilets are available to prisoners in Leeds prison; how many baths or showers each prisoner is allowed per week; and how many changes of clothes each prisoner is allowed per week.

Mr. Mellor: Leeds currently has available to inmates a total of seven baths, 41 showers, 93 WCs and 82 urinals. Each prisoner is normally allowed one bath or shower per week and an additional shower when he makes use of the gymnasium. In addition, prisoners employed on jobs that are of a physically dirty nature have a shower each day as do prisoners returning from court appearance. Prisoners at Leeds have one change of clothes per week consisting of one shirt, one pair of socks, one pair of underpants and one vest. Overclothing is changed as necessary but, on return from Court, prisoners receive a full kit of clean clothes.

In addition one towel, two sheets and one pillow-case are changed weekly and a full set of bedding is available to prisoners on return from court.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space are available to prisoners in Leeds prison.

Mr. Mellor: 40,837 square feet in exercise yards, 5,662 square feet in the hard surfaced games area, and 1,690 square feet in the gymnasium are available in Leeds prison.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average population of Leeds prison in the week ended 2 November, or any other recent typical week.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985 the population of Leeds prison was about 1,280. Average weekly populations are not recorded centrally.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the week ended 2 November, or any other recent typical week the workshops in Leeds prison were open; what was the average number of prisoners employed; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of inmates in each class; how many individual prisoners attended at least one class during the week; and how much time on average each prisoner spent out of his cell during that week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November 1985 one of seven workshops at Leeds prison was closed for structural alterations. The remaining six workshops were open for an average of 21 hours employing an average of 37 prisoners. In addition 238 prisoners were employed on domestic, catering and maintenance duties.

Ninety-five classes were held during this week with total class hours of 195½ and the average number of prisoners attending each class was 6½. One hundred and forty-three prisoners attended at least one class. It is not practicable to calculate the average amount of time spent out of cells since this covers many things besides work and education, for example, visits, medical treatment and applications to see the Governor.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners who can be employed in workshops in Leeds prison on any one day.

Mr. Mellor: Three hundred and thirty-four.

Police Trainees (Cwmbran)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many trainee police officers have passed through the police training centre at Cwmbran in each year from 1980 to 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of police recruits completing courses at the police training centre Cwmbran in each year from 1980 to 1985 is as follows:

1980—1,055; 1981—891; 1982—562; 1983—605; 1984—608; 1985—616 (including those currently at the centre and due to complete courses by 20 December).

Police

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of current expenditure on the police in England and Wales is represented by wages and salaries of *(a)* police officers and *(b)* civilians.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The provisional figures for current expenditure on the police in England and Wales in the financial year 1986-87 forecast 71 per cent. on police officers' pay and allowances, and 11 per cent. on civilians' pay.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to transfer duties now performed by police officers to civilians.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This is primarily a matter for chief officers of police and their police authorities, in the light of Home Office circular No. 114/1983 on manpower, effectiveness and efficiency in the police service, a copy of which was placed in the Library. We continue to encourage chief officers of police to release police officers, wherever possible, from duties which can be more properly and economically carried out by civilians. My right hon. Friend shall shortly be issuing guidance about coroners' officer posts.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what indicators are used by his Department to assess value for money or productivity in the police forces of England and Wales; and if he will arrange for the regular publication of information relating to such indicators.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We look to Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary for a professional judgment of a force's overall effectiveness. Home Office circular 114/1983, a copy of which is in the Library, sets out the broad criteria they will apply in considering whether a force is effectively and efficiently managed. I would also refer the right hon. Member to "Measures of Police Effectiveness" (Home Office Research and Planning Unit Paper 25), a copy of which is also in the Library. This has been drawn to the attention of chief officers of police and police authorities. We have asked HM inspectors to pay particular attention to the ways in which performance is assessed in forces, in order that good practices may be identified and more widely encouraged.

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the anticipated total expenditure on wages and salaries of *(a)* police officers and *(b)* civilians in the police forces of England and Wales in 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89; and what are the manpower assumptions on which the projections are based;

(2) what is the anticipated manpower of the police forces of England and Wales for the years 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89, distinguishing between police officers and civilians;

(3) what is the anticipated total expenditure on the police in England and Wales in 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested, which is available, in respect of the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87 is as follows. Details for the further two years 1987-88 and 1988-89 cannot be given in advance of the forthcoming White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89.

	Financial Year	
	1985-86	*1986-87*
	£	£
Total Expenditure on the Police	2,935·3 million	3,024·8 million
Pay and Allowances		
Police Officers' Pay and Allowances	*	2,016·7 million
Civilians' Pay	*	315·1 million
Manpower Assumptions		
Police Officers	120,888	121,661
Civilians†	39,111	39,882
Total Manpower Assumptions	159,999	161,543

Notes

* The total expenditure figure for 1985-86 includes the sum of current expenditure in local authority budgets, from which the pay and allowances element is not separately identifiable.

† The civilian figure includes part-time staff on a 2 for 1 basis and excludes traffic wardens and cadets.

Bangladesh Passengers

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers from Bangladesh were detained overnight during July and September compared with the same period in the previous year.

Mr. Waddington: The information in the form requested is available only for the immigration service detention units at Harmondsworth, Queen's Building, Heathrow, and Gatwick.

The number of passengers from Bangladesh who were detained for further examination, or after being refused leave to enter, for at least one night at those three units for the months of July, August and September is as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Harmondsworth	25	242
Queen's Building	59	101
Gatwick	2	15

It is possible that there may be a small element of double counting in these figures as some detainees may have moved from one unit to another.

Immigration (Detained Persons)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all people currently in detention under immigration regulations, where they are detained and the date they were first held.

Mr. Waddington: I will reply as soon as possible.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* different press releases were issued, *(b)* press conferences were held and *(c)* different documents or papers relating to information or publicity were issued by his Department in the past 12 months.

Mr. Hurd: In the 12 months up to 14 November 1985 my Department:

(a) issued 345 press notices.

(b) held 20 press conferences.

and *(c)* issued 110 publicity and information leaflets and booklets.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost to his Department of issuing press releases, holding press conferences and issuing documents or papers of information or publicity in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Hurd: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what form his Department keeps accounts of its expenditure on publicity; and by what means those accounts are published.

Mr. Hurd: Provision to meet expenditure on publicity is made in the Supply Estimates in votes IX, 7 subheads K1 (6) and D 10 (1) and IX, 8 subhead A11 (3).

Detailed expenditure records are kept for all publicity projects and are available on request to right hon. and hon. Members.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Export Licensing

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the costs of the export licensing operations for 1984 and 1985; and what is the estimated increased cost of operating the new export of goods order licensing régime for 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Channon: The costs of my Department's staff handling export licence applications, together with an appropriate share of accommodation costs and overheads are:

	£ million
1984	1·21
*1985	1·41
*1986	1·56

* Estimate.

No separate estimate has been made of what the costs might be if the new order had not been made.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many export licence applications he has had since the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1985 came into operation; how many of those applications have been dealt with and how many are pending; and of these, how many have been pending for more than 18 weeks.

Mr. Channon: 25,800 export licence applications have been received since 25 July of which 24,000 have been cleared and 1,800 are pending. Most of the pending cases have been received within the past two weeks. None has been pending for more than 18 weeks.

Export Administration Act 1985

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to seek to bring to an end the implementation of the United States Export Administration Act 1985 in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I continue to emphasise to the United States Administration the Government's objections to the claims to extraterritorial control over exports maintained in the new Export Administration Act and to warn of the damaging consequences to our mutual interests of attempts to enforce such claims in the United Kingdom. Efforts to prevent or resolve problems arising from such controls will continue to be made under the consultation arrangements agreed by the United Kingdom and United States Governments in November 1984.

Computers

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many computer systems in the United Kingdom, and in United Kingdom Government installations, are subject to movement and change of use restrictions imposed by the vendors according to United States export laws and regulations.

Mr. Channon: This information is not available.

Fireworks

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation further restricting the sale of fireworks to schoolchildren; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: It is already an offence to sell fireworks to anyone under 16. Since the main problem lies with the 13 to 15-year-olds, we intend to revise the legislation so that magistrates can impose heavier penalties for selling fireworks to people under 16 and for letting them off in public.

Cement

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the implications for the United Kingdom cement industry of the current level and pattern of imports of cement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Both my Department and the Department of the Environment maintain close contact with the cement industry and are fully aware of the concern expressed at the increased level of low-priced imports of certain types of cement into the United Kingdom. Following a complaint from the liaison committee of the cement industries in the European Community alleging that imports of Portland cement originating in Spain, Poland, GDR and Yugoslavia were being dumped and thereby causing or threatening injury to the Community cement industry, the Commission opened an anti-dumping investigation on 2 April 1985. It is expected that an announcement of the preliminary findings of the Commission's investigation will be made shortly.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate what proportion of the research work being carried out under the Alvey programme by GEC is applicable *(a)* purely to defence purposes, *(b)* purely to civilian use and *(c)* either to defence or civilian use.

Mr. Butcher: The work supported under the Alvey programme is of an advanced nature and its potential applications are not all, as yet, entirely determined. My assessment is that none of the work funded by the Alvey

programme at GEC is applicable purely to defence purposes and almost all could be applicable either to defence or civilian use.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he expects the full amount allocated to the Alvey programme to be used in 1985-86; and what expenditure he anticipates being incurred in financial years beyond 1985-86.

Mr. Butcher: As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member on 30 October, I expect expenditure by the Department of Trade and Industry in 1985-86 to be £18 million, this is the sum currently allocated for this year. Expected expenditure for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88 is £20·8 million and £23 million respectively. Spending allocations have not yet been determined beyond the end of 1987-88.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria he has established for giving or withholding his agreement in respect of the exploitation outside the EEC of the results of work funded under the Alvey programme.

Mr. Butcher: The occasion for making such decisions has not yet arisen. When it does, the criterion will be the national interest in the light of conditions prevailing at the time.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, further to his reply of 30 October, *Official Report*, column *480*, about the continued support for the development of advanced information technology in Britain beyond the cessation of the Alvey programme in 1988, he will indicate the status of views expressed at the Alvey conference in July by the Minister for Information Technology that any continued programme would rely on less Government money, more commercial financial involvement, and increased European collaboration.

Mr. Butcher: I do not think that my hon. Friend's remarks were meant to carry as precise an interpretation as the hon. Member has placed on them and I have thus arranged to place a copy of the text of what he actually said in the Library of the House. My hon. Friend was setting the scene for the debate on the lessons learned from the Alvey programme and on what is to follow it.

High Technology Companies

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he or his officials have contacted high technology companies which are or have been trading in the United Kingdom about granting access for United States customs officials to their sales and other internal documents;

(2) what discussions his Department has had with the American Government about granting access for United States customs officials to the sales and other internal documents of United Kingdom high technology companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Following discussions with the United States authorities about the request from the Department of Commerce to make visits in connection with the new distribution licence regulations, my officials have contacted a number of British companies to seek their views. The Government will in due course consider whether to agree to such visits and on what terms. In the meantime, none have been approved.

Consultancies

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made any assessment of the financial value arising from the contractual and manufacturing opportunities arising in the United Kingdom from British consultants' achievements overseas.

Mr. Channon: Overseas work undertaken by British consultants has provided opportunities for United Kingdom contractors and manufacturers but it is not possible to quantify the financial value.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what initiatives he proposes to take to seek to ensure British consultants working overseas have the same financial support as do other countries' consultants from their Governments.

Mr. Channon: United Kingdom consultants do benefit from Government financal support both directly, from bilateral aid including the aid and trade provision, and the overseas projects fund; and indirectly, through consultancies funded by multilateral lending agencies to which the United Kingdom subscribes. The independent and professional status of United Kingdom consultants does not enable direct comparisons to be made with many overseas consultants. The Overseas Projects Board, which includes experienced consultants, has taken an interest in this subject, and I welcome the recent establishment by the British Consultants Bureau of a group to consider the issues in more detail.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the current annual value of work of British consultants in the construction industry in overseas earnings.

Mr. Channon: The net overseas services earnings in 1984 of United Kingdom firms of consulting engineers, process engineers, architects and chartered surveyors is estimated at about £1 billion.

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the current annual value of work of British consultants in overseas earnings; and what proportion of the total of British overseas earnings this represents.

Mr. Channon: The net overseas services earnings in 1984 of specialist United Kingdom consultancy firms is estimated at about £1·25 billion. This represents just under 1 per cent. of all United Kingdom overseas earnings.

Girobank

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the reasons for and the implications of the decision to turn Girobank into a public limited company, as a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Post Office, on 3 October.

Mr. Butcher: The transfer of the Post Office's banking business to a subsidiary company, Girobank plc, was the logical culmination of the policy of creating smaller, fully accountable units within nationalised industries in the interests of maximum efficiency. The Post Office has said that the bank's relations with its customers will not be affected in any way.

Allied Lyons (Takeover)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when he expects to receive a report from the Director General of Fair Trading on the proposed takeover of Allied Lyons by Elders IXL;

(2) if he will refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the proposed takeover of Allied Lyons by Elders IXL.

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to reach a decision on the possible reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of the bid by Elders IXL Ltd. to take over Allied Lyons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The proposed merger between IXL Ltd and Allied Lyons plc is currently being considered by the Office of Fair Trading. My right hon. and learned Friend will anounce his decision on a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission as soon as is practicable in the light of the advice which he will receive from the Director General of Fair Trading.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the balance of trade in *(a)* information technology and *(b)* micro-electronics in 1979 and in each of the subsequent years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Butcher: Available information is shown in the table.

Crude balance of trade £ million*

	Information Technology—Manufacturing Component†	*Micro-Electronics‡*
1979	−468	−13
1980	−384	−8
1981	−1,070	−144
1982	−1,458	−182
1983	−2,149	−418
1984	−2,259	−679

Notes:

* The crude balance of trade is exports fob less imports cif.

† The manufacturing component of the information technology industry is defined as the following activity headings in the Standard Industrial Classification (1980): Office machinery (AH 3301), electronic data processing equipment (AH 3302), telegraph and telephone equipment (AH 3441), radio and electronic capital goods (AH 3443), passive electronic components (AH 3444), active electronic components and sub-assemblies (AH 3453), and electronic consumer goods (AH 3454).

‡ The micro-electronic industry is taken as being the following two activity headings in the Standard Industrial Classification (1980): passive electronic components (AH 3444) and active electronic components and sub-assemblies industries (AH 3453).

Industrial Output

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of total United Kingdom manufacturing industrial output is represented by *(a)* automobiles and *(b)* electronics in 1979 and each of the subsequent years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of the national output of manufacturing industry is represented by the largest 100 companies in *(a)* 1955, *(b)* 1970, *(c)* 1979 and *(d)* 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Figures provided in the following table relate to the manufacturing activity of the largest 100 enterprises in the private sector, defined in terms of their employment in manufacturing. Estimates for 1983 and 1984 are not yet available. No comparable figures exist for years prior to 1970.

Share of Total Manufacturing Activity accounted for by the Largest 100 Private Sector Enterprises

	Net Output (per cent.)
1970	36
1979	37
1982	37

Source: Annual census of production; Business Monitor PA 1002.

Insurance

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce legislation to require all insurance companies to pay interest on life policies from the day on which the policy becomes due.

Mr. Channon: Whilst my right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to introduce such legislation, I welcome the fact that in the forthcoming revision of Association of British Insurers' Statement of Long-Term Insurance Practice, which will contain a number of changes, there will be a revised requirement to pay interest in all cases from a date two months after the happening of the insured event (death or maturity or from the date on which the unit-linking ceased.) This does not of course preclude companies from paying interest from an earlier date, but builds into the statement current industry good practice.

Job Creation (Bolton)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many jobs have been created in the Bolton area since June 1983 as a result of his Department's special measures.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Three hundred and forty-three jobs are expected to be created as a result of regional selective assistance, and 54 as a result of investment grants associated with the business improvement services. Figures are not readily available for the other schemes operated by the Department.

British Overseas Trade Board

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the funding of the British Overseas Trade Board.

Mr. Channon: The BOTB net expenditure budget has been set at the following levels:

	£ million
1986-87	26·9
1987-88	26·6
1988-89	27·3

Note: The budgets for 1986-87 and 1987-88 are £500,000 lower than those shown in the BOTB's consultation document issued on 3 December 1984. This is solely a technical adjustment to compensate for the transfer to the BOTB budget from another Department of Trade and Industry Vote of estimated revenue from the export intelligence service; the effective amount of the BOTB budget is unchanged from the consultation document figures.

As my hon. Friend will appreciate with the soft loans scheme announced by my right hon. and learned Friend, the total audit of resources devoted to helping British exports has been substantially increased.

West Midlands County Council (Trade Promotion)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department provided any advice or assistance to the West Midlands county council in connection with its recent trade promotion visit to Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The most recent missions to Hong Kong from the West Midlands which received British Overseas Trade Board support were those organised by the Coventry and Dudley chambers of commerce in March 1985 and October 1985 respectively.

Financial Aid Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing the application for *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* selective financial assistance in each year since 1979, and by each standard region.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

13. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency since its inception.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: From 1 January 1976 to 31 March 1985 gross expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency totalled £560·9 million. Gross expenditure in the current year is expected to be of the order of £70 million.

Health Service (Private Practice)

14. **Mr. Gareth Wardell** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what role he envisages for private practice in the Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend has no plans to alter the long-standing practice of providing for limited facilities for private practice in NHS hospitals.

Computer Studies

15. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many children at present in the fifth and sixth forms in schools in Wales are being taught computer studies.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Last summer about 8,250, or 19 per cent., of fifth formers and 480, or 5 per cent., of sixth formers in Wales sat 16 plus or A-level WJEC computer studies examinations. This indicates the scale of study of this subject although not reflecting the widespread use of computers across the curriculum.

NHS (Pay Awards)

16. **Mr. Raffan** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy towards the funding of National Health Service pay awards in the Principality next year.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Health authorities in Wales will be expected to meet all pay and price increases from within the resources allocated to them for 1986-87 by my right hon. Friend. Authorities will be notified of their allocations for 1986-87 as soon as possible after decisions have been taken.

Hospital Buildings, Bangor

17. **Mr. Abse** asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now make a statement on progress since his statement in the House on 28 February in resolving the dispute between the Welsh Health Common Services Authority and IDC Ltd. concerning defective hospital buildings in Bangor.

Mr. Mark Robinson: WHTSO, now named the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, claimed £130,000 from IDC Ltd., being the cost of remedying building defects in the staff residences at Ysbyty Gwynedd. The present position is that WHCSA has exercised its right to set off the full amount of this claim against money payable to IDC Ltd. under the contract. As far as WHCSA is concerned, it has therefore recovered the full cost of the remedial measures, and there the matter rests.

Legal action against the Hospital Design Consortium (HDC Ltd.) and Haden Young Ltd. for defective work on the main hospital building and the staff residences is being vigorously pursued by WHCSA. I shall report the outcome fully to the House.

Hospital Ancillary Services (Tendering)

18. **Mr. Grist** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he proposes to take to seek to ensure that area health authorities in Wales open their hospital ancillary services to competitive tender.

Mr. Mark Robinson: My right hon. Friend has made it absolutely clear that he expects health authorities in Wales to take decisive action to test the efficiency and cost effectiveness of their catering, domestic and laundry services by implementing competitive tendering programmes. Experience in Wales and elsewhere has already clearly shown that such programmes can achieve substantial savings for use in providing improved patient care.

All authorities have now responded to my right hon. Friend's request for progress reports, and these are currently being studied.

Farm Incomes

19. **Mr. Harvey** asked the Secretary of State for Wales by how much average real farming incomes in Wales have changed over the past two years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The latest published figures from the farm management survey in Wales show that average real farming incomes on fully-time dairy and livestock farms in Wales decreased by £355 in 1982-83 and £565 in 1983-84, representing decreases of 5 and 8 per cent., respectively. These follow increases of 12 and 27 per cent. in 1980-81 and 1981-82.

Economic and Industrial Prospects

20. **Sir Raymond Gower** asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his general assessment of economic and industrial prospects in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The continued growth of activity within the economy as a whole will bring benefit to industry within Wales. Levels of inward investment, new projects secured and the successful creation of small businesses all point to a broadening and strengthening of the Welsh economy, which I very much welcome.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department has issued any general guidance to district councils in Wales concerning procedures relating to the disposal of toxic waste; and whether he has received any representations recently concerning such procedures.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Guidance to district councils explaining the controls introduced by the Control of Pollution (Special Waste) Regulations 1980 was issued to local authorities in the form of Welsh Office circular 8/81, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Representations from local authorities, trade and industry have been under consideration by a joint review committee. A statement will be made shortly by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from Gwynedd health authority in the current year advocating improved treatment facilities for cancer sufferers living in Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In the course of its consultations, a Welsh Office working group has been instructed to review the provision of regional services, including facilities for cancer sufferers, in north Wales, and has received representations from Gwynedd health authority for improvements in treatment facilities. These are being considered and a report is expected in the near future.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of youth training scheme leavers in Wales who left the scheme during 1985 are currently in full-time employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information about YTS leavers in 1985 is not yet available. The most recent published results of a sample survey of people who left youth training schemes in Wales related to the period between July and September 1984. This gave a figure of 49 per cent. in full-time employment. In addition, 10 per cent. were in part-time employment, college or school or another youth training scheme.

Hypothermia

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have died of hypothermia in Wales in each year from 1979 to 1984, inclusive.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In the years 1979 to 1984 the number of deaths of people usually resident in Wales where hypothermia was mentioned on the death certificate was as follows:

Year	*Number of Deaths*
1979	73
1980	41
1981	57
1982	52
1983	29
1984	*37

* Provisional.

Council House Sales

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for council house sales in each Welsh district authority.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest available figures for council dwelling sales in each Welsh district authority are as follows:

All sales

Welsh districts	*1979 to September 1985*
Alyn and Deeside	956
Colwyn	451
Delyn	1,235
Glyndŵr	722
Rhuddlan	469
Wrexham Maelor	1,408
Carmarthen	789
Ceredigion	826
Dinefwr	401
Llanelli	2,041
Preseli	1,254
South Pembroke	529
Blaenau Gwent	971
Islwyn	2,319
Monmouth	1,401
Newport	2,420
Torfaen	1,821
Aberconwy	964
Arfon	782
Dwfor	239
Meirionydd	547
Yns Môn	745
Cynon Valley	796
Merthyr Tydfil	1,060
Ogwr	2,452
Rhondda	276
Rhymney Valley	2,087
Taff-Ely	1,879
Brecknock	830
Montgomery	845
Radnor	369
Cardiff	3,816
Vale of Glamorgan	2,031
Afan	1,876
Lliw Valley	1,001
Neath	1,279
Swansea	1,412
Wales Total	45,299

Hospital Waiting Lists

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what changes have occurred in hospital waiting lists in Wales during the period since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The following table shows the year on year percentage changes in the size of the inpatient and outpatient hospital waiting lists for all specialties in Wales during the period December 1979 to December 1984.

	Waiting list at 31 December 1979	*Percentage changes*				
		1980-79	*1981-80*	*1982-81*	*1983-82*	*1984-83*
Inpatients	38,395	−1·4	−12·4	+24·1	−2·8	+0·8
Outpatients	57,554	−3·8	+6·1	+10·1	+6·8	+13·2

Information relating to hospital waiting lists at 31 December for individual specialties is published annually in "Bed Use Statistics". A copy of the publication for each of the years 1979 to 1984 is available in the Library.

Hospital Building

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the consequences in Wales of increased resources for hospital building recently announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Provision for capital spending in future years will be determined by my right hon. Friend in the light of the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his autumn statement, and in the light of other considerations relating to the allocation of funds between those programmes for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has discretion to apportion expenditure.

Hip Replacement Operations

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average waiting period for non-emergency hip replacement operations in the areas of each of the Welsh health authorities.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. The following table relates to patients admitted to hospital from the waiting list who were discharged in 1984 following a hip replacement operation.

Area of Treatment	*Average Waiting Time (days)*
Clwyd	440
East Dyfed	149
Pembrokeshire	365
Gwent	268
Gwynedd	145
Mid Glamorgan	192
Powys	—
South Glamorgan	190
West Glamorgan	196

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* different press releases were issued, *(b)* press conferences were held and *(c)* different documents or papers of information or publicity were issued by his Department in the past 12 months.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Over the 12 months ending 31 October 1985 my Department (a) issued 1,139 different press releases; (b) held regular press conferences, briefings and interviews; (c) issued 184 posters, leaflets and other printed material in both English and Welsh languages.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the cost to his Department of issuing press releases, holding press conferences and issuing documents or papers relating to information or publicity in the last 12 months for which figures are available;

(2) in what form his Department keeps accounts of its expenditure on publicity; and by what means those accounts are published.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Records for these activities are not separated from overall publicity costs, and accounts of publicity expenditure are not published.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

St. Helenian Ebony

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the incidence of St. Helenian ebony; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: St. Helenian ebony, one of roughly 40 endemic species on the island, was presumed extinct for more than a century until it was discovered in November 1980. It has since been successfully propagated both by the island's Forestry Department and at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew. Conservation of endemic flora is one element of a five year forestry project which was approved earlier this year. One of the long-term objectives of the project is re-afforestation of eroded areas. Trials have indicated that ebony and other endemic species can contribute towards this. In the past two years, more than 1,100 ebonies have been planted on the island.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (Wales)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the European Commission to seek to ensure that prospective parliamentary candidates are excluded from employment by the Commission in Wales.

Mr. Rifkind: The European Communities staff regulations, in article 12, lay down safeguards governing

the outside activities of officials of the Communities. It is for the appointing authority to enforce these regulations, and we hope they will do so scrupulously.

Argentina

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from British companies wishing to tender for oil exploration contracts in Argentina about the implications for their chances of obtaining such contracts of the current state of relations between Argentina and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar: None. In general we welcome efforts by British companies to expand their activities in Argentina. Our initiative in lifting restrictions of imports from Argentina in July, to which the Argentine Government have still not responded constructively, was aimed at improving commercial relations.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made during the past six months on establishing normal diplomatic relations with the Argentine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have taken a number of initiatives to begin the process of restoring confidence and rebuilding our bilateral relations. The most recent step was the lifting of our ban on Argentine imports into the United Kingdom in July. We still hope that the Argentine Government will see the advantages of responding constructively.

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Renton: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House library.

Access to manual files on individuals is strictly limited on a need to know basis. The list of authorised persons is kept under review.

Immigration

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why there is a time lag of eight years in New Delhi between an application for a special voucher to settle in the United Kingdom and the date for the applicant to be interviewed; how many applications are now outstanding; how many entry clearance officers are at present in post at the high commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 11 November at column *63*. The issue of vouchers in India is regulated by the quota. Demand has exceeded the quota resulting in a queue. Waiting times are falling.

At 31 July there were 3,137 applications outstanding. There are four entry clearance officers in New Delhi; a further entry clearance officer will join the establishment in December. There are also five entry clearance officers in Bombay.

GCHQ

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the reasons for the rejection by Government communications headquarters management of the attempts of the two recent trade union rejoiners to return the £1,000 payment made in lieu of statutory trade union rights.

Mr. Renton: Under the terms of General Notice GN 100/84 which explained the changes in terms and conditions of service at Government communications headquarters, staff there were asked to choose one of two options:

(a) to remain at GCHQ under the revised terms and conditions of service, or

(b) to transfer elsewhere in the Civil Service.

Option A involved giving an undertaking not to join a trade union other than a Departmental staff association approved by the director. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend issued certifications under section 138(4) of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and section 121(4) of the Employment Protection Act 1975 exempting GCHQ staff, on national security grounds, from the application of those acts. In recognition of the withdrawal from GCHQ staff of those statutory rights, a special ex gratia payment of £1,000 was made to those who elected to remain with the Department. We expect those staff who signed option A to honour their undertaking, and we do not accept that they can evade this responsibility by simply returning the ex gratia payment.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list the occasions when trade union membership and related action has led to breaches of security at Government communications headquarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the current state of security at Government communications headquarters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Although it is never possible to guarantee that security anywhere is entirely watertight, security at GCHQ is constantly under review; and we are satisfied that all practicable and desirable measures necessary to ensure security at GCHQ are either already in force, or are being introduced in the light of recommendations made by the Security Commission.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the effectiveness of Government communications headquarters' contributions to Western intelligence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: In a statement made to the House on 12 May 1983, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that

"the functions of GCHQ are to ensure the security of the United Kingdom's military and official communications and to provide signals intelligence in accordance with the requirements laid down by the Government in support of the Government's defence and foreign policies".

We are satisfied that GCHQ carries out these functions in an effective and professional manner.

Afghanistan

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to publicise and protest against abuses of human rights in Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We take every opportunity to make clear our grave concern at the gross violation of human rights by the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and did so most recently on 13 November in the United Nations General Assembly debate on Afghanistan. We welcomed the fact that the Assembly condemned the Soviet occupation by a record majority of 122 votes to 19.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with other EEC countries about events in Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: On 22 and 23 July 1985, my right hon. and learned Friend discussed developments in Afghanistan with his Community colleagues. Their joint statement supporting the UN peace talks and condemning the Soviet occupation formed the basis of the statement made by the Luxembourg Foreign Minister on behalf of the Community to the UN General Assembly on 12 November.

Expenditure

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's plans for expenditure *(a)* on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and *(b)* on its associated public bodies for the years 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made in the House by my right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 12 November at column 431. Further details of expenditure plans will be published in the Public Expenditure White Paper in January and thereafter in the Supply Estimates.

Mr. Peter Glibbery

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning assistance given by Her Majesty's Government to Peter Glibbery of Shirley in Solihull currently held in custody in Costa Rica.

Mr. Eggar: Since Mr. Glibbery's arrest on 24 April he has received almost weekly consular visits. Representations have been made by HM ambassador on three occasions at a very high level, in addition to regular approaches by his staff at official level, to secure Mr. Glibbery's release or to bring his case to court.

The case was also raised by my right hon. and noble Friend Lady Young on 11 November with the Costa Rican Foreign Minister.

Foreign Ministers (Meeting)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent meeting of Foreign Ministers from the EEC, Central American and Contadora countries, in Luxembourg.

Mr. Eggar: The Luxembourg meeting, which my right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State attended, was a practical demonstration by the members of the European Community of support for the Contadora peace process. Political and economic agreements with the Central American states were successfully concluded. The European Community agreed to increase substantially aid to promote economic co-operation in the region.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether a United Kingdom Minister will be attending next year's meeting of European Economic Community and Central American Foreign Ministers to be held in Guatemala; what consideration will be given to the absence of consular and diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Our representation at the next meeting of the European Community, Central America and the Contadora states in Guatemala will be considered in due course in consultation with our European partners. We hope the election of a democratic Government in Guatemala will facilitate a resumption of official relations for which we have always been ready.

Special Voucher Applications

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much longer he estimates that an applicant for a special voucher which was lodged at the district high commission in Bombay on 24 October 1979 will have to wait for it to be processed;

(2) at the most recent convenient date, how many special voucher applications were awaiting processing in India;

(3) if he will give the approximate date on which applications were made for the special vouchers which are currently being processed at the district high commission in Bombay.

Mr. Eggar: Waiting times are not generally forecast because they are determined by variable factors and may also be substantially affected by unforeseen circumstances. Applicants issued with special vouchers in Bombay this month had applied in December 1977. We anticipate waiting times will now shorten as the number of applications lodged since 1977 has declined.

At 31 July there were 3,137 special voucher applications outstanding in India.

EMPLOYMENT

Self-employed Persons

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Paymaster General how many self-employed persons there were in each of the years 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and the current year to date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The estimated total numbers of self-employed persons in Great Britain in June of each year since 1979 are as follows:

	Number
1979	1,842,000
1980	1,950,000
1981	2,057,000
1982	2,109,000
1983	2,160,000
1984	2,433,000
1985	2,559,000

The estimate for June 1985 is provisional.

Community Programme

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Paymaster General what steps he takes to seek to ensure consistency in the operation of the community programme, particularly in south coast areas.

Mr. Alan Clark: The community programme is mounted on a national basis, and the same rules and guidelines apply in all areas.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General how many people have been made redundant so far in 1985 *(a)* on Merseyside, *(b)* in Knowsley and *(c)* in Kirkby.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is given in the following table.

*Redundancies confirmed as due to occur * from January to September† 1985*

	Number
Merseyside Metropolitan County‡	7,038
Knowsley Local Authority Area‡	687
Kirkby Jobcentre Area	62

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notification of impending redundancies involving 10 or more workers.

† Includes provisional figures for August and September.

‡ Groupings of jobcentre areas approximating to the area.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General when he expects all those in Knowsley who want full-time employment to be able to work.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Government's policies are helping to create the economic and industrial conditions in which enterprise can flourish. How long it will take to achieve significant reductions in unemployment in the Liverpool area, including Knowsley, depends on the success the area has in attracting new investment and on the efforts of local industry to improve its competitiveness.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General what is the number of *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* young people who have been unemployed for more than a year, two years, three years and four years (i) on Merseyside, (ii) in Knowsley and (iii) in Kirkby.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the requested information in respect of unemployed claimants as at 10 October 1985. Unemployment statistics are no longer produced for jobcentre areas, and figures are given for the Knowsley, North parliamentary constituency which closely corresponds to the Kirkby jobcentre area.

Duration of Unemployment

	Over one year	*Over two years*	*Over three years*	*Over four years*
Merseyside				
Male	56,990	40,174	28,956	20,042
Female	15,164	8,717	5,256	3,057
Aged under 18 years	951	0	0	0
Borough of Knowsley				
Male	8,829	6,530	4,963	3,586
Female	2,160	1,286	795	473
Aged under 18 years	151	0	0	0
Knowsley North parliamentary constituency				
Male	4,603	3,484	2,708	2,015
Female	1,002	646	393	225
Aged under 18 years	69	0	0	0

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General what is the number of vacancies *(a)* on Merseyside, *(b)* in Knowsley and *(c)* in Kirkby.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres and careers offices in the requested areas as at 4 October 1984. Figures for vacancies at jobcentres and careers offices cannot be added together because some vacancies are notified to both offices.

Unfilled vacancies

	Jobcentres	*Careers offices*
Merseyside Metropolitan County	2,994	61
Borough of Knowsley	190	0
Kirkby jobcentre area	72	0

Mr. Kilroy Silk asked the Paymaster General what is the number unemployed and the job vacancies in each occupation *(a)* on Merseyside, *(b)* in Knowsley and *(c)* in Kirkby.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Table 1 shows the numbers of unemployed claimants at 10 October 1985 in the metropolitan county of Merseyside, the borough of Knowsley, and the parliamentary constituency of Knowsley, North, which corresponds to the Kirkby jobcentre area.

Table 2 shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies in the main occupation groups at 6 September 1985 in the jobcentres, which cover areas closely corresponding to the metropolitan county of Merseyside and the borough of Knowsley, together with the figures for the Kirkby jobcentre area. More detailed occupational analyses of vacancies in these areas are available in the Library.

TABLE 1
Unemployment in Merseyside

	Unemployed Claimants at October 1985
Merseyside Metropolitan County	140,164
Borough of Knowsley	20,222
Knowsley North Parliamentary Constituency	9,826

TABLE 2
Unfilled Vacancies in Merseyside

	September 1985
Merseyside Metropolitan County	
Managerial and Professional	374
Clerical and related	613
Other non-manual occupations	532
Craft and similar occupations	323
General labourers	54
Other manual occupations	1,202
Knowsley borough council	
Managerial and Professional	34
Clerical and related	49
Other non-manual occupations	34
Craft and similar occupations	28
General labourers	1
Other manual occupations	63
Kirkby Jobcentre	
Managerial and Professional	14
Clerical and related	15
Other non-manual occupations	8
Craft and similar occupations	9
General labourers	1
Other manual occupations	27

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General how many jobs have been lost since 1979 *(a)* on Merseyside, *(b)* in Knowsley and *(c)* in Kirkby.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics. Net changes in employment can be given, but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken. The latest available information is from the June 1978 and the next census of employment taken in September 1981 and is as follows:

Employees in Employment

	June 1978	*September 1981*	*(Thousands) Net change 1978 to 1981*
Merseyside	615·9	555·4	−60·5
Knowsley	54·9	46·1	−8·8
Kirkby	26·1	20·9	−5·2

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Paymaster General what is the number of persons *(a)* on Merseyside, *(b)* in Knowsley and *(c)* in Kirkby on each of the temporary employment or training schemes.

Mr. Alan Clark: Some 26,000 in Merseyside and some 6,000 in Knowsley at the end of September. The estimates for the individual measures are set out in the table.

	Merseyside	*Knowsley*	*Kirkby*
Youth Training Scheme	12,842	1,669	*N/A
Community Programme	6,010	2,768	*N/A
Community Industry	728	132	96
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	1,852	N/A	*N/A
Young Workers Scheme	3,185	95	20
Job Splitting Scheme	41	1	Nil
Job Release Schemes	1,084	823	39
	25,742	5,488	

* Figures for Kirkby are not available separately.

Mr. Hardy asked the Paymaster General by what proportion unemployment has risen since May 1979 in the United Kingdom, in the county of South Yorkshire and in the Rotherham metropolitan district.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Between May 1979 and October 1985, unemployment, excluding school leavers, rose by 168 per cent. in the United Kingdom. In calculating this proportion, account has been taken of changes in the coverage of the count over the period and of seasonal influences.

It is difficult, for areas smaller than regions, to make a comparison with May 1979, because of the change in the basis of the count in October 1982, the 1983 budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer need to sign on at unemployment benefit offices to receive benefit, and the change to a ward-based system for allocating claimants to localities. Statistics of unemployment for local authority districts are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of jobs created, by each standard region, in the categories of *(a)* employees, full-time, *(b)* employees, part-time, and *(c)* self-employed from December 1982 to the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

The following table gives the comparisons between levels of employment at December 1982 and June 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, for the areas specified. Estimates of part-time employees in employment at these dates are available only for females. The estimates of the self-employed after June 1984 are provisional.

Net changes in levels of employment between December 1982 and June 1985

	Employees in employment		*Self-employed*
	Males and full-time females	*Part-time females*	
South East	6,000	147,000	173,000

	Employees in employment		*Self-employed*
	Males and full-time females	*Part-time females*	
Greater London (included in South East)	52,000	34,000	*
East Anglia	18,000	17,000	24,000
South West	−6,000	62,000	27,000
West Midlands	−30,000	24,000	34,000
East Midlands	−26,000	26,000	12,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	−64,000	27,000	41,000
North West	−65,000	64,000	47,000
North	−58,000	19,000	9,000
Scotland	−41,000	55,000	24,000
Wales	−18,000	19,000	34,000

* Not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing, for each standard region, the number of jobs lost from June 1979 to the most recent date for which figures are available in the categories *(a)* manufacturing industries and *(b)* all industries and services.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job gains and job losses is not available from the Department's statistics, but an indication of the net changes can be seen by comparing levels of employment at different dates.

The following table gives the changes in numbers of employees in employment between June 1979 and June 1985, the lates date for which figures are available, for the categories specified.

Net changes in employees in employment between June 1979 and June 1985

	Manufactuing industries	*All industries and services*
South East	−337,000	−217,000
East Anglia	−29,000	+3,000
South West	−71,000	−57,000
West Midlands	−289,000	−314,000
East Midlands	−116,000	−136,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	−199,000	−262,000
North West	−295,000	−306,000
North	−125,000	−219,000
Scotland	−171,000	−167,000
Wales	−110,000	−132,000

Departmental Files (Access)

Mr. Cohen asked the Paymaster General what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In handling information about individuals on computer files, the guidelines for Government Departments issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency are observed. These guidelines are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21". Copies have been placed in the Library.

Access to manual files containing information on individuals, including personnel files, is controlled on a "need-to-know" basis. Files containing confidential or personally sensitive information are kept in secure conditions. Arrangements for logging, where necessary, are matched to the particular requirements of the filing system concerned.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Butler asked the Paymaster General if it is his intention to continue the job release scheme in its present form beyond March 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Yes. The job release scheme will continue from March 1986. I will be keeping its scope and rates of allowance under review.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown of the regional variations which exist of the percentage of youth training scheme places assessed for performance.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Wage Arrears (Prosecutions)

Mr. Rooker asked the Paymaster General how many cases the wages inspectorate has taken to court so far in 1985, in respect of arrears of wages; and how many cases are in hand.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There has been one successful prosecution for an offence under wages council legislation so far this year. A further three cases involving criminal proceedings are in hand. In addition, one case concerning arrears of wages has been heard in the civil courts and a further 14 cases are pending.

Outdoor Excavations (Airborne Asbestos)

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what criteria are used to define reasonably practical levels of airborne asbestos in the guidelines relating to outdoor excavations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The criteria for occupational exposure are set out in Health and Safety Executive guidance notes EH10 and EH40. I have placed copies of these in the Library.

The lowest reasonably practicable level will vary according to the circumstances of each case.

Asbestos

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to further tighten the regulations governing the removal and disposal of asbestos.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consultations are in progress for new regulations to replace the Asbestos Regulations 1969. These regulations would apply to the removal of asbestos.

Controls for the disposal of asbestos waste are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many people have participated in job relief schemes in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The number in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area in receipt of an allowance under the job release scheme on 6 November 1985 was 441. Cumulative travel-to-work area figures are not available back to 1979.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many jobs are being supported by job protection or job creation schemes in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area.

Mr. Allan Clark: Some 8,000 people are currently being supported by our employment and training measures in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the registered number of vacancies by standard industrial classification in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area.

Mr. Allan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres which cover an area closely corresponding to the Portsmouth travel-to-work area as at 2 August 1985, the latest date for which an analysis according to the 1980 standard industrial classification is available.

Unfilled vacancies—Jobcentres in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area August 1985

Standard Industrial Classification 1980	*Unfilled vacancies*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	12
Coal extraction	0
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0
Mineral oil processing	0
Nuclear fuel production	0
Gas, electricity and water	0
Extraction of other minerals and ores	1
Metal manufacture	0
Manufacture of non-metallic products	0
Chemical industry	7
Production of man-made fibres	0
Manufacture of metal goods	39
Mechanical engineering	6
Manufacture of office machinery and data processing equipment	51
Electrical and electronic engineering	0
Manufacture of motor vehicles	4
Shipbuilding and repairing	9
Manufacture of aerospace and other transport equipment	7
Instrument engineering	2
Food, drink and tobacco	4
Textiles	3
Leather, footwear and clothing	7
Timber and furniture	17
Paper, printing publishing	7
Other manufacturing	7
Construction	76
Wholesale distribution	9
Retail distribution	116
Hotel and catering	75
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	4
Transport	8
Telecommunications	2
Insurance, banking, finance and business services	56
Public administration and defence	57
Medical and other health services	33
Other services—not elsewhere classified	56
Total	675

Businesses (Statistics)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list, for each standard region, the latest available figures for the number of new business starts and business stops since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Members' Bills

Mr. White asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table listing the sponsors of private Members' Bills which received extra parliamentary time from the Government; what stages received such time; the dates such time was given; and which Bills received the Royal Assent in each Session since 1955.

Mr. Biffen: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my replies to his questions on 15 March 1985, at columns 278-89, and to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 6 July 1984, at columns 297-304. No parliamentary time has been devoted to private Members' Bills by the Government since these questions were answered.

New Palace Yard (Trees)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Lord Privy Seal if it is intended to cut down the trees in New Palace Yard adjoining Parliament street.

Mr. Biffen: A recommendation that the catalpa trees in New Palace Yard should be replaced was first made by the Services Committee in 1982 (First Report, 1981-82, HC485), on the advice of the Department of the Environment and the Bailiff of the Royal Parks. In that report the Services Committee sought the views of Members on the type of replacement trees to be planted; and the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee subsequently resolved in favour of replacement by catalpas. Because of financial constraints and the activities of the stone restoration contractors, it has not so far been possible to undertake the work; but I understand that provision for this purpose has been included in the parliamentary works programme for 1986-87 and that it is intended to carry out felling and re-planting in autumn 1986.

THE ARTS

Fund Raising (Lottery)

31. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Minister for the Arts what consideration has been given to arrangements for a lottery to raise funds for the arts.

Mr. Luce: Lotteries for the benefit of the arts and other good causes can already be promoted under the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1976.

Museum and Gallery Charges

32. **Mr. Murphy** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on her Majesty's Government's policy towards museum and gallery charges.

36. **Mr. Adley** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on the proposals by some museums to introduce voluntary charges.

Mr. Luce: The Government's policy is not to impose general admission charges for the main collections of the national museums and galleries. That is a matter for the trustees' discretion. There is already a well-established practice of charging for entry to some museums' outstations and special exhibitions.

South Bank

34. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make additional funds available to the Arts Council to run the South Bank following abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Luce: I refer the hon. Member to my statement of 14 November, when I announced additional post-abolition funding for the Arts Council. It is for the Arts Council to determine how much of its grant is allocated to the South Bank.

Northern Arts

35. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will take steps to increase the funding of Northern Arts.

Mr. Luce: The funding of Northern Arts is a matter for the Arts Council, and for the appropriate local authorities. The Arts Council will be allocating to Northern Arts a part of the additional post-abolition funding which I announced on 14 November.

Elgin Marbles

37. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's response to the UNESCO request for the return of the Elgin marbles to Greece.

Mr. Luce: Her Majesty's Government replied on 30 October to the Greek request, received through UNESCO. The Government's policy has not changed.

Yorkshire

38. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Minister for the Arts what was the level of Government aid for the arts in Yorkshire for each year since 1979; and what is the planned expenditure of support for the current year.

Mr. Luce: With permission, I shall place a table detailing Government aid since 1979 in the Library of the House.

Works of Art (Purchase)

39. **Mr. Rathbone** asked the Minister for the Arts what plans he has for further encouraging the purchase of works of art.

Mr. Luce: I take every opportunity to encourage the purchase of works of art.

Arts Council (Funding)

Sir David Price asked the Minister for the Arts what reply he has given to the Arts Council's request that it will require £37 million in 1986-87 to make good the shortfall in arts support consequential upon the abolition of the Greater London council and the six metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Luce: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement in the House on 14 November.

Prescot Museum

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Minister for the Arts who will assume responsibility for the Prescot museum after 1 April 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The liabilities of Merseyside county council under the joint agreement between it and Knowsley borough council for the administration of the Prescot museum will vest in the Merseyside Residuary Body on 1 April 1986. The collections at present on loan to the museum from Merseyside county council will vest in the new Merseyside Museum and Galleries Trustee Body which is to be established by Order in Council in accordance with section 46 of the Local Government Act 1985. It will be for all the parties involved to discuss future administrative and loan arrangements for the Prescot museum.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Salisbury

Mr. Key asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will identify any property acquired by or on behalf of the Church Commissioners in the city of Salisbury within the past 10 years.

Sir William van Straubenzee: In December 1984 the commissioners acquired the freehold of No. 17 and land behind No. 19 New Canal, Salisbury, as an addition to their portfolio of investment properties.

Shareholdings

Mr. Key asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, whether the Church Commissioners are shareholders in *(a)* Woolworth Holdings, *(b)* Habitat/Mothercare, *(c)* Harris Queensway, *(d)* ASDA/MFI or *(e)* W. H. Smith.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Church Commissioners hold shares in Habitat/Mothercare; ASDA/MFI and W. H. Smith but not in Woolworth Holdings and Harris Queensway.

SCOTLAND

Road Accidents (Cumbernauld)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fatal road accidents have occurred in Cumbernauld new town in each year since 1975.

Mr. Ancram: The number of reported accidents in which at least one person was killed within the designated area of Cumbernauld new town in each year from 1979 until 1984, the latest year for which figures are available, is as follows:

	Number
1979	4
1980	5
1981	2
1982	6
1983	0
1984	4

Figures for the years prior to 1979 are not readily available.

New Towns

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairmen of Scotland's five new town development corporations; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend last met the chairmen on 8 July 1985 when a number of subjects of mutual interest were discussed, including industrial promotion and housing policy.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the Registrar General's actual or estimated population for each of the five Scottish new towns from 1980 to 1985 at the normal July date; and what are the projected population figures from 1986 to 1990.

Mr. John MacKay: The Registrar General's mid-year estimates of the population in new towns for 1980 to 1984 are given in the table. His estimates for mid-1985 are not yet available. The Registrar General does not produce projections of population for areas smaller than local authority districts.

Scottish New Towns—Estimated Population

	*1980**	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Cumbernauld	50,400	48,600	48,500	48,000	49,600
East Kilbride	75,900	71,900	71,600	70,600	70,400
Glenrothes	37,500	35,400	36,100	36,700	37,500
Irvine	59,600	55,200	56,000	56,400	56,200
Livingston	37,600	37,200	37,800	38,500	38,900

* There is a discontinuity in the series between 1980 and 1981. The 1981-84 figures have been rebased on the final results from the 1981 Census of Population.

M80

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made in determining the line of the M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs.

Mr. Ancram: Evaluation of extensive traffic studies is in progress. Once this has been completed, a preferred route will be published as quickly as possible.

M8

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what has been the cost of maintaining the M8 motorway within the Glasgow city boundaries for each year since 1979, expressed as a percentage of the total cost of maintaining Scotland's motorway system;

(2) what has been the cost of motorway maintenance in respect of the M8 motorway within the Glasgow city boundaries for each year since 1979.

Mr. Ancram: Maintenance of the M8 motorway within the Glasgow city boundary is the responsibility of Strathclyde regional council. I do not have at my disposal the information requested by the hon. Member.

Speed Restrictions (Cumbernauld)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to assess the advisability and practicability of introducing speed restrictions on those roads in Cumbernauld new town for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Ancram: The only roads for which my right hon. Friend has responsibility in Cumbernauld new town are the A73 and A80 trunk roads. He is satisfied that the national speed limit is appropriate for these roads and that the criteria for imposition of a lower limit would not be met.

Water

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the the water supply areas with the regional authorities where water is supplied which does not meet the requirements of the European Economic Community directive on drinking water in respect of *(a)* aluminium, *(b)* lead, *(c)* iron, *(d)* manganese and *(e)* nitrates; and by which date each regional authority is expected to be able to comply fully with the directive as regards the maximum content of each of these substances in drinking water.

Mr. Ancram: The water supply areas where the requirements are not met in respect of aluminium, iron and manganese and the dates by which each regional authority expects to comply fully with the Directive as regards these substances are as follows:

Borders Region

Aluminium:
- Roxburgh, part of Ettrick and Lauderdale
- Galashiels, Melrose, Earlston
- West Berwickshire

Iron:
- Ettrickbridge
- East and central Berwickshire
- Yarrowford*
- West Linton, Blyth Bridge*

1989

Central Region:

Aluminium:
- Bannockburn, Plean
- Bonnybridge, Haggs, Camelon
- West Stirlingshire
- Alloa
- Kirkintilloch (part), Lenzie

Iron:
- Killin*
- Callander*

1999

Dumfries and Galloway Region

Aluminium and manganese:
- Wigtown District
- Castle Douglas (part), Dalbeattie, New Galloway (Mn*)
- Corsock, Kirkpatrick Durham, Crocketford
- Kirkcudbright, Gatehouse

Aluminium, manganese and iron:
- New Abbey

Manganese and iron:
- Carsphairn
- Moffat
- Langholm
- Newton Stewart, Minnigaff
- Palnure
- Castle Douglas

Manganese:
- Creetown
- Stranraer
- Kirkconnel, Kelloholm

Central Nithsdale
Dumfries
Gretna, Springfield
Annan*

Date not settled

Fife Region
Aluminium and manganese:
Cupar (Mn*)

1986

Grampian Region
Aluminium:
Keith
Buckie
Stonehaven, parts Kincardine and Deeside
Aluminium and manganese:
Elgin, parts of Moray (Mn*)
Iron and manganese:
Forres
Manganese:
Banff*

1990

Highland Region
Aluminium:
Black Isle, Easter Ross
Iron:
Newtonmore
Wick
Bonar Bridge, Ardgay
Manganese:
Nairn*

1999

Lothian Region
None—requirements met in all supply areas

Strathclyde Region
Aluminium:
West Kilbride
Parts of Hamilton, East Kilbride, Clydesdale, Motherwell and Monklands Districts
Howwood, Johnstone, Kilbarchan, Elderslie
Dumbarton
Duntocher, Dalmuir
Port Glasgow, Langbank
Gourock
Greenock
Skelmorlie
Ardrossan
Irvine, Kilwinning, Saltcoats, Stevenston
Giffnock, Newton Mearns, Whitecraigs
Girvan, Ballantrae, Barr, Pinwhar
Lochwinnoch, Bridge of Weir, Kilmacolm
Kilmarnock
Kilbirnie
Fairlie, Hunterston, Cumbrae
Inveraray, Bridge of Douglas
Ardrishaig, Lochgilphead
Rothesay, Port Bannatyne (Bute)
Tobermory (Mull)
Bruichladdich, Port Charlotte (Islay)
Bowmore, Port Ellen (Islay)
Aluminium and manganese:*
Inverkip, Wemyss Bay
Dunlop, Lugton
Cumnock and Doon Valley District
Kyle and Carrick District
Ayr, Irvine, Kilmarnock, Prestwick, Troon
Aluminium and iron:*
Muasdale
Carradale
Campbeltown
Paisley
Aluminium, manganese and iron*:*
Tarbert
Tighnabruaich
Furnace, Minard
Manganese and iron:*
Cove, Kilcreggan
Rosneath, Rhu
Portnahaven
Kilberry
Ross of Mull
Ballygrant, Keils
Clachan
Manganese:*
Ardrishaig, Lochgilphead
Newmilns
Galston
Largs, Hunterston
Iron:*
Gigha
Tayinloan
Carrick Castle
Arrochar, Garelochhead
Bowling
Cardross
Catacol
Millport
Whitehouse
Kilmichael
Leanach
Tiree
Kilmory
Tullochgorm
Nereabolls
Claddich
Iona
Lochdonhead
Dunsyre
Airdrie, Coatbridge
Dumbarton
Manganese:*
Clydebank, Bearsden, Mossend, Milngavie

1995

Tayside Region:
Aluminium:
Kirkmichael

1990

Orkney Islands
Aluminium:*
Orkney mainland (south), South Ronaldsay
Kirkwall
Orkney mainland (north)
Westray
Sanday

Shetland Islands:
Aluminium:*
Cullivoe
Bressay
Aith
Walls
Reawick and Skeld
Aluminium and iron*:*
Sandness
Iron:*
Sandwick

Western Isles
Iron:*
Ardvourlie
Maaruig
Seilobost
Tolsta
Leurbost
Balallan
Tarbert
Sollas
Scalpay

Rodel
Northton
Manish, Flodday, Likisto
Bernera
Callanish
Carloway
Islivig
Lemreway
Uig
Achmore
Cromore, Gravir
Habost, Caversta
Stornoway
Cliasmol
Meavaig
Benbecula
Berneray
Castlebay, Vatersay
Eriskay
Howmore, Daliburgh
Leverburgh
Lochboisdale
Lochmaddy
Northbay
Houghgarry, Bayhead, Grimsay†
Ness†

† Expected to comply by 1986

Items marked with an asterisk have been granted derogation from complying with the directive but will be reviewed in not more than ten years. There have been no applications in respect of nitrate levels which do not meet the requirements of the directive. Information on lead levels in individual supply areas is currently being gathered. The whole of Scotland is covered by the Government's application to the European Commission for a five-year delay in respect of lead. It is expected that substantial compliance will be achieved in that time.

Student Grants

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average time taken by the Scottish Education Department to answer *(a)* appeals against refusal of student grants, and *(b)* reassessments of parental income arising out of the first offers of student grants; whether any acknowledgements are sent; and what are the reasons for delay.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information is not available in the form requested. Between the beginning of May and the end of October 1985, over 64,000 applications for students' allowances were received by the Scottish Education Department. In addition the Department received some 32,000 letters about students' allowances including requests for review and notifications of changes of circumstances. Some 85 per cent. of those letters were dealt with within four weeks of receipt. Acknowledgements are generally sent only in response to applications for allowances.

The Department's principal priority during the period of peak activity is to ensure that students receive grants in time for the start of the academic session. The overwhelming majority of students are paid correctly and on time.

Udston Hospital

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to authorise the plans for a 120-bed long-stay unit at Udston hospital, Hamilton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: My Department has been in detailed discussion with Lanarkshire health board over the proposed development of 120 geriatric and psychiatric assessment beds at Hairmyres hospital, East Kilbride and 120 geriatric and psychogeriatric long-stay beds at Udston hospital, Hamilton. The capital cost of this combined development, which would be met from central funds, is estimated at about £6 million on present plans. The Department is currently awaiting additional information from the health board to support its case for the project, and approval to the project will have to await the receipt and consideration by the Department of that information.

Prisons

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the exact sums spent on prison buildings and accommodation in Scotland for each of the last 10 years, giving figures for each year; and what is the proposed expenditure for 1986 and 1987.

Mr. John MacKay: Annual capital expenditure on prison building in Scotland since 1975, with planned expenditure in the current and next two years, is as follows:

	£ million
1975-76	3·6
1976-77	6·6
1977-78	1·7
1978-79	1·7
1979-80	1·5
1980-81	2·9
1981-82	3·9
1982-83	4·4
1983-84	5·5
1984-85	10·5
1985-86	*11·7
1986-87	*8·8
1987-88	*9·8

* Provisional.

Defective Housing

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to make available the £3 million for defective housing in Scotland; and if he will make an up-to-date statement.

Mr. Ancram: I hope to announce within the next few weeks supplementary capital allocations to cover local authorities' estimated expenditure this year under the provisions of the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Council House Sales (East Lothian)

Mr. Home Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to make good any shortfall in receipts from the sale of council houses which have been projected by his Department for East Lothian district by making supplementary capital allocations for the council's programme of capital expenditure on housing for the current year and for subsequent years.

Mr. Ancram: I have given an undertaking to consider sympathetically the case of any housing authority which is this year experiencing a shortfall in receipts from the sale of council houses as a result of factors outwith its control. The issue and timing of supplementary allocations will however depend on the availability of resources. I am not in a position to give a similar undertaking in respect of future years.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* different press releases were issued, *(b)* press conferences were held and *(c)* different documents or papers relating to information or publicity were issued by his Department in the past 12 months.

Mr. Younger: The following is the information:

(a) 1,757.

(b) News conferences are held very frequently, no record is maintained.

(c) Individual leaflets, posters, and other paid publicity items total about 260.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost to his Department of issuing press releases, holding press conferences and issuing documents or papers of information or publicity in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Younger: The running costs of the Scottish information office in 1984-85 amounted to approximately £1·5 million, including the cost of paid publicity. It is not possible to calculate as a separate item within the overall budget the costs of the activities requested by the hon. Member.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland in what form his Department keeps accounts of its expenditure on publicity; and by what means those accounts are published.

Mr. Younger: The total costs of the Scottish information office are subsumed under subheads A1 and A2 of the Estimates for Scottish Office Administration (class XV, Vote 24) and have been published annually in the Appropriation Account.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Prison Statistics

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the weekly cost of keeping a prisoner in custody in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Year	£
1980	255
1981	382
1982	459
1983	530
1984	640

The costs for 1981 to 1984 are for calendar years. The figure for 1980 is for the financial year 1979-80. No figures are yet available for 1985.

Remand Statistics

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many persons were remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded with in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively;

(2) what was the average time spent on remand for those who were subsequently acquitted or not proceeded with during 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively;

(3) how many persons who were remanded in custody and subsequently acquitted or not proceeded against spent *(a)* nil to three months on remand, *(b)* three to six months on remand, *(c)* six to nine months on remand, *(d)* nine to 12 months on remand and *(e)* over 12 months on remand in respect of those first remanded during 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the following table sets out (1) the number of persons who were in custody at the time of trial and were subsequently acquitted or not proceeded with in the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively; (2) the average time on remand (including time on bail) for such persons; and (3) a breakdown of these persons by length of time on remand.

Year of discharge	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Time on remand (including time on bail)					
0-3 months	387	396	157	102	97
3-6 months	64	41	32	15	14
6-9 months	46	16	20	15	13
9-12 months	9	11	7	8	15
over 12 months	9	20	4	23	25
Total persons	515	484	220	163	164
Average length on remand (including time on bail) (days)	62	71	71	131	176

Secondary Schools

Mr. McCusker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which secondary schools in Northern Ireland have been granted additional scale score points.

Mr. Scott: The following is the information:

Armagh Secondary School	Armagh
Ashfield Boys Secondary School	Belfast
Ashfield Girls Secondary School	Belfast
Aughnacloy Secondary School	Aughnacloy
Ballycastle High School	Ballycastle
Ballymena Boys High School	Ballymena
Ballymena Girls High School	Ballymena
Ballymoney High School	Ballymoney
Brownlow Junior High School	Craigavon
Carrickfergus High School	Carrickfergus
Castle High School	Belfast
Castlederg Secondary School	Castlederg
Christian Brothers' Secondary School	Glen Road Belfast
Christian Brothers' Secondary School	Gort Na Mona
Clounagh Junior High School	Craigavon
Coleraine Boys Secondary School	Coleraine
Coleraine Girls Secondary School	Coleraine
Cross and Passion High School	Belfast
Cullybackey High School	Cullybackey
De La Salle Secondary School	Downpatrick
Dean Brian Maguire Secondary School	Carrickmore
Deramore Secondary School	Belfast
Drumcree High School	Portadown
Dunclug High School	Ballymena
Faughan Valley High School	Cross
Fivemiletown High School	Fivemiletown
Forth Bridge High School	Belfast
Garvagh High School	Garvagh
Hopefield Secondary School	Newtownabbey
Kelvin Secondary School	Belfast
Killicomaine Junior High School	Craigavon
La Salle Boys Secondary School	Belfast
Lagan College	Belfast
Larkfield Secondary School	Belfast
Limavady High School	Limavady
Lismore Comprehensive School	Craigavon
Lisnaskea High School	Lisnaskea
Little Flower Girls Secondary School	Belfast
Lurgan Boys Junior High School	Lurgan
Lurgan Girls Junior High School	Lurgan
Maghera High School	Maghera
Magherafelt High School	Magherafelt
Model Boys Secondary School	Belfast
Model Girls Secondary School	Belfast
Newry High School	Newry
Omagh Secondary School	Omagh
Orangefield Boys Secondary School	Belfast
Orangefield Girls Secondary School	Belfast
Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School	Belfast
Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School	Strabane
Our Lady of Lourdes Secondary School	Ballymoney
Our Lady's High School	Cookstown
Rathcoole High School	Newtownabbey
St. Aloysius Secondary School	Cushendall
St. Augustine's High School	Belfast
St. Brecan's High School	Londonderry
St. Brigid's Girls Secondary School	Omagh
St. Brigid's Boys High School	Armagh
St. Catherine's College	Armagh
St. Cecilia's Secondary School	Londonderry
St. Ciaran's Secondary School	Ballygawley
St. Colman's High School	Strabane
St. Colman's High School	Ballynahinch
St. Colmcille's High School	Crossgar
St. Colm's Secondary School	Draperstown
St. Columban's High School	Kilkeel
St. Columba's High School	Portaferry
St. Comgall's High School	Larne
St. Fanchea's Girls Secondary School	Enniskillen
St. Gabriel's Secondary School	Belfast
St. Gemma's Secondary School	Belfast
St. Genevieve's High School	Belfast
St. John's Secondary School	Dromore
St. Joseph's High School	Coalisland
St. Joseph's Boys Secondary School	Enniskillen
St. Joseph's Secondary School	Londonderry
St. Joseph's Secondary School	Coleraine
St. Joseph's Boys Secondary School	Newry
St. Joseph's High School	Crossmaglen
St. Louise's Comprehensive College	Belfast
St. Malachy's High School	Castlewellan
St. Mark's High School	Warrenpoint
St. Mary's High School	Limavady
St. Mary's Girls High School	Downpatrick
St. Mary's Girls High School	Newry
St. Mary's Junior High School	Lurgan
St. Mary's Secondary School	Londonderry
St. Mary's Secondary School	Irvinestown
St. Mary's Secondary School	Portglenone
St. Monica's Secondary School	Belfast
St. Olcan's Secondary School	Randalstown
St. Patrick's Secondary School	Belfast
St. Patrick's Boys Secondary School	Omagh
St. Patrick's and St. Brigid's Second School	Claudy
St. Patrick's High School	Dungiven
St. Patrick's High School	Ballymena
St. Patrick's High School	Maghera
St. Patrick's High School	Banbridge
St. Patrick's Girls Secondary School	Dungannon

St. Patrick's High School	Cookstown
St. Patrick's High School	Keady
St. Patrick's Boys Secondary School	Dungannon
St. Paul's Junior High School	Lurgan
St. Paul's Secondary School	Belfast
St. Paul's Secondary School	Kilrea
St. Paul's Secondary School	Newry
St. Peter's Secondary School	Belfast
St. Peter's Secondary School	Londonderry
St. Pius X Secondary School	Magherafelt
St. Rose's Secondary School	Belfast
St. Thomas's Secondary School	Belfast
Stella Maris Secondary School	Newtownabbey
Tandragee Junior High School	Tandragee

Republic of Ireland

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what (i) questions and (ii) other points about administration in the Province have been raised with him by the Government of the Republic of Ireland in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1985; on which of them he has taken action as a result of the representations received, stating the grounds in each case; and why he took no action on each of those on which action was not taken.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

TRANSPORT

M1 Motorway (Signpost Damage)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport what average period of time in months elapses before damaged road signs are repaired on the M1 between Wakefield and London.

Mr. Ridley: The information to enable an average period to be calculated is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Damaged road signs on motorways are repaired or replaced as soon as practicable. The period of time varies because, for example, most large direction signs are individual in design. The work can take some months before the new signs are in position.

Blood-Alcohol Levels

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information is available to him as to the percentage reduction in human reaction time and alertness caused by a 80 mg/100 ml alcohol level in the blood; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The International Road Research Documentation scheme, of which the Transport and Road Research Laboratory is the English language centre, lists over 7,000 references of some relevance to this question. Results of these studies indicate that alcohol impairs all human reactions and that this occurs progressively for the smallest doses taken*. There are wide variations associated with such factors as age and drinking experience.

A recent review† states:

"Although every independent investigator has found reaction time to increase with increasing blood-alcohol levels, no simple correlation between percentage increase and level can be detected".

I have asked that new work is undertaken on impairment, and that recent overseas research be examined fully in this respect.

References:

* Drew, G. C.; Colquhoun, W. P. and Long, M.A. (1959): Effect of small doses of alcohol on a skill resembling drivers (Medical Research Council Memorandum No. 38, HMSO, London).

† Walls, H. J. and Brownlie, A. R. (1985): 'Drink Drugs and Driving', 2nd Edition, Sweet and Maxwell, London p 47.

British Airports Authority

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the financial provision by the Government for the British Airports Authority, distinguishing between revenue and capital allocations, for each year since 1965.

Mr. Ridley: The financial provision by the Government for the British Airports Authority since it was created in 1965 has consisted of a commencing capital debt of £52·91 million, of which the amount outstanding at 31 March 1985 was £38·8 million and NLF loans totalling £19 million, of which the amount outstanding at 31 March 1985 was £9·4 million.

The details are shown in the following table:

	Loans
1966-67	—
1967-68	2
1968-69	3
1969-70	1
1970-71	—
1971-72	—
1972-73	—
1973-74	—
1974-75	—
1975-76	8
1976-77	—
1977-78	—
1978-79	—
1979-80	—
1980-81	—
1981-82	5
1982-83	—
1983-84	—
1984-85	—

In addition, the Government made capital grants totalling £24 million for the development of Edinburgh and Aberdeen airports following their acquisition by the authority in April 1971 and January 1975.

Coaches (Motorway Driving)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to report on consultations with coach operators to seek to prevent coaches speeding in motorway overtaking lanes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My earlier discussions with the Bus and Coach Council led to the code of conduct which came into effect at Easter 1984. Despite its observance by the majority of coach operators and drivers, the number of coaches exceeding the motorway speed limit remains a matter of great concern. As I told the House on Friday 15 November we have decided that the right way to enforce the 70 mph speed limit on coaches is through a legal requirement that all coaches be fitted with speed governors.

I shall also be consulting coach operators, among others, on implementation of this decision, including an adequate timetable.

Coach Safety

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for discussions with coach operators on safety measures to seek to prevent injuries in the event of accidents including better supported roofs, securely fitted windows, better anchored seats and the fitting of safety belts.

Mrs. Chalker: We are already discussing our proposals for a number of new safety measures with the coach industry and these include roof strength and seat belts. A draft international standard on the strength of coach seats and their anchorages is currently being considered in the UN:ECE technical working group on coach safety. I have no plans at present to introduce any new requirement for the fixing of coach windows.

M25 (Service Areas)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects construction work to start and finish on the first two motorway service areas to serve the M25 motorway.

Mrs. Chalker: Construction of the South Mimms motorway service area will commence soon after final planning clearance is received. All being well, facilities will be available to the public in late 1986. At Thurrock, construction is expected to start in 1986, again subject to completion of planning and land acquisition procedures. These facilities should be available to travellers in 1987.

Copenhagen Airport (Incident)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he has received any report from the Civil Aviation Authority about the circumstances surrounding the collapse of the starboard undercarriage of a British Airways aircraft at Copenhagen on 12 November;

(2) if he has had any recent consultations with the Civil Aviation Authority about the servicing and maintenance procedures of British Airways aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I shall answer these questions shortly.

ENVIRONMENT

Domestic Water Metering

Mr. Patrick Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Watts committee on domestic water metering to report.

Mr. John Patten: I have received the committee's report and intend to publish it shortly.

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Environment what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: In the case of computer files containing information on individuals, specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in 'Protection of Information in Computer Systems' and 'Central Government Code of Practice No. 21', issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House library.

Manual files on individual members of staff are open only to the personnel officers responsible for those staff and to other officers with a "specific need to know".

Agricultural Land

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications of the proposed revisions to the recategorisation of areas of agricultural land for the contents of circular 1976-75 entitled "Development Involving Agricultural Land"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The review of agricultural land classification by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has not been completed. It is too early to say, therefore, what revision, if any, of circular 75/76 might be needed.

"Distribution of Grant Inquiry"

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he intends to publish the 1983 "Distribution of Grant Inquiry".

Mrs. Rumbold: A summary of the main findings of the distribution of grant inquiry was published in May 1985 as an annex to the Green Paper on home improvement policy. A final report will be published as soon as possible.

Housing (Repair Grants)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to bring forward measures to allow owners of houses in multiple occupation to apply for repair grants.

Sir George Young: Special grants are already available, at the discretion of the local authority, towards repairs of houses in multiple occupation where the works are associated with the provision of standard amenities or means of escape from fire. I am now considering the results of consultation on the home improvement Green Paper which envisages assistance for this and other work.

Beta-blocking Drugs

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence he has of the extent of misuse of beta-blocking drugs by sportsmen to improve their performance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Government condemn the improper use of drugs in any context, but the deplorable practice of drug abuse in sport is primarily an ethical one for sport to grasp and take action on. My Department does not keep details of which sportsmen and women within particular sports cheat by the use of drugs. As I said in my reply to the hon. Member of 30 October, action to combat drug abuse is

vigorously and positively led by the Sports Council, whom I fully support in this matter. The council is aware that beta-blockers are used in some cases to aid performance and is funding research to establish a reliable method of detection. The council is also pressing for the drug to be included in the International Olympic Committee's list of banned drugs.

Homeless Persons

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the number of homeless households housed as secure tenants as a proportion of all new households housed as secure tenants by local authorities in *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* metropolitan districts, excluding Greater London, *(c)* non-metropolitan districts, and *(d)* England for the years 1978-79 to 1984-85 inclusive;

(2) how many homeless households were housed as secure tenants by local authorities in 1984-85 in *(a)* Greater London, *(b)* metropolitan districts, excluding Greater London, *(c)* non-metropolitan districts and *(d)* England; and how many new households were housed as secure tenants by local authorities in 1984-85 in (i) Greater London, (ii) metropolitan districts, excluding Greater London, (iii) non-metropolitan districts and (iv) England.

Sir George Young: The available figures, derived from local authorities' Housing Investment Programme returns, are as follows:

Homeless households† housed as secure tenants by local authorities

	Greater London	*Metropolitan districts*	*Non-metropolitan districts*	*England*
			percentage of all new secure tenancies	
1978-79*	25	9	14	14
1979-80*	30	10	13	15
1980-81	27	12	15	16
1981-82	29	12	15	17
1982-83	33	14	16	18
1983-84	38	15	15	18
1984-85	44	17	16	20
			thousand new secure tenancies	
1984-85				
homeless households	13·7	14·0	18·6	46·4
all	31·1	81·4	116·1	228·7

* Excluding lettings by the GLC which made no return: the corresponding percentages for 1980-81 would be 31 per cent. for Greater London and 16 per cent. for England.

† Households accepted as homeless and in priority need.

Park Plaza Scheme, Hatfield

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the inspector into the Park Plaza scheme proposed for the land above the A1(M) tunnel section at Hatfield.

Mr. Tracey: The inspector's report was received in June 1985. The decision on the planning application will be issued as soon as possible.

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what disposal was made of the Lobby carpets that were replaced during the summer recess.

Sir George Young: Carpets in the West and East Lobbies were last replaced in 1983 and 1984 respectively.

During the 1985 summer recess, however, carpets were replaced in the Library corridor, the Tea Room, the Ways and Means corridor, Westminster Hall Committee Room corridor, the Commons private corridor, the Committee Offices, the *Official Report* Reporters Room, the Liberal Whip's Office and the Harcourt Room. In all cases the serviceable areas of carpet taken up have, or will be, used elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster. Areas that are unsuitable for re-use will be destroyed.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on proposals for waste disposal in Greater Manchester.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend will make a statement shortly.

Local Authorities (Staff)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in descending order for each London borough, the Inner London education authority and the Greater London council, the number of local authority employees per 100 inhabitants.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information is as follows:

Authority	*June 1985 Figures Staff per hundred population*
GLC	0·35
ILEA	3·82
City of London	57·62
Inner London Boroughs	
Camden	4·51
Lambeth	4·29
Hackney	4·14
Lewisham	3·62
Greenwich	3·45
Tower Hamlets	3·29
Westminster	3·18
Hammersmith	2·85
Kensington & Chelsea	2·19
Wandsworth	2·06

This information is not available for Islington and Southwark.

Authority	June 1985 Figures Staff per hundred population
Outer London Boroughs	
Haringey	6·46
Newham	6·16
Brent	5·22
Waltham Forest	5·22
Barking & Dagenham	5·10
Hounslow	4·68
Kingston-upon-Thames	4·67
Hillingdon	4·32
Havering	4·03
Harrow	3·97
Ealing	3·96
Bexley	3·89
Barnet	3·78
Enfield	3·68
Croydon	3·67
Redbridge	3·62
Richmond-upon-Thames	3·30
Sutton	3·21
Bromley	3·19
Merton	2·89

NOTES TO TABLES

1. The figures relate to total numbers of employees (full-time and part-time).

2. Inner and Outer boroughs have different responsibilities and have therefore been ranked separately.

Public Sector Housing

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the comments he has received from the organisations to which he sent the letter of 17 July regarding "Disposal of Public Sector Housing for Renovation: Proposals for Legislation".

Mr. John Patten: No. Responses to the letter of 17 July regarding "Disposal of Public Sector Housing for Renovation: Proposals for Legislation" were received from the following bodies:

Association of District Councils
Association of London Authorities
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Community Rights Project Limited
Coventry Trades Council Housing Sub-Committee
Elmbridge Federation of Tenants' Associations
Greater London Council
Housing Corporation
Institute of Housing
Local Government Information Unit
London Tenants' Organisation
National Consumer Council
SHAC (The London Housing Aid Centre)
Shelter
Southwark Law Project
Sunderland Borough Council
Tower Hamlets Federation of Tenants' Associations
Wandsworth Tenants' Association
Waterlow Estate Tenants' Association
Welsh Counties Committee
Wimbledon Park Estate Tenants' Association

The points made are being taken into account in drafting the provisions to be included in the forthcoming housing legislation.

Asbestos Tips

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of asbestos tips which have been excavated in the last 10 years; and if he will provide a breakdown according to the different volumes on the tips involved.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department does not keep records of this nature. Excavation of waste tips is a work activity subject to the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974. The enforcement authority for such work is the Health and Safety Executive.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the London Docklands Development Corporation's 1985 corporate plan and operational plan will be published.

Sir George Young: The next edition of the corporate plan and the operational plan will be published in spring 1986, because the planning cycle has been changed to correspond with the start of the financial year.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific responsibilities the London Docklands Development Corporation has, as a planning authority, for the provision of health care facilities; and what arrangements exist with the local authorities and health authorities to enable these responsibilities to be carried out.

Sir George Young: The corporation has no statutory responsibilities for the provision of health care. It does, however, liaise with health authorities, local authorities and the family practitioner committee over the provision and implementation of their services within the UDA.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the London Docklands Development Corporation monitors house prices on privately owned dockland land.

Sir George Young: Not specifically, but LDDC keeps itself informed of the state of the private housing market in docklands.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what trade unions the London Docklands Development Corporation recognises, or has agreements with; and what time and facilities are made available for employees to conduct trade union business.

Sir George Young: The LDDC recognises and has a procedural agreement with NALGO. The LDDC provides reasonable paid time and facilities for appointed representatives to conduct their trade union activities.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many jobs were located in the London Docklands Development Corporation area for each of the last four years.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply* 15 November 1985, c. *312*]: The following information is drawn from the Department of Employment Census of Employment 1981 and an independent LDDC survey in 1983:

Year	Jobs
1981	30,270
1983	25,030

The results of the 1984 Department of Employment census and the LDDC survey 1985 will be available shortly.

The drop between 1981 and 1983 reflects the end of cargo handling within the LDDC area and the loss of employment from some key manufacturing firms. The figures for 1984 and 1985 will show the effect of the 5,900 new jobs (including an average of 1,500 construction workers at any one time) created within the UDA since the establishment of the LDDC.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what decision has been made by his Department concerning the authority to manage the operation of the Docklands light railway.

Sir George Young: The Government have not yet reached a decision on this issue.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of local people currently employed on the construction of the Docklands light railway.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of the Docklands light railway spur from Canning Town to Stratford.

Sir George Young: I understand that there are no proposals to build a spur of the Docklands light railway directly from Stratford to Canning Town, which are already connected by British Rail's North Woolwich line. The LDDC has however, identified the route of a possible spur from the proposed eastern extension to Canning Town at an estimated cost of £3 million.

Rate Equalisation Scheme

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he will measure the extent to which the proposed extended London rate equalisation scheme will achieve the Government's objectives, as expressed in his Department's recent consultation paper dealing with the disappearance of the Greater London council precept.

Mrs. Rumbold: When we take our decisions on the London rate equalisation scheme for 1986-87 we shall take into acount all the relevant considerations, including the views expressed by local government in response to the consultations.

Grant Related Expenditure

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Enviroment what is his Department's current position on grant related expenditure.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) on 29 October at column *390*. Final decisions on GREs will be announced in December as part of the RSG settlement for 1986-87.

Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission

Mr Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any member of his Department transferred, or about to be transferred, to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission suffered, or will suffer, financial detriment as a result of the transfer.

Mr. Tracey: No. The National Heritage Act 1983 precludes such detriment.

Greater London Council (Staff Code)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to give his consent to the change in the staff code of the Greater London council in order to provide indemnity to employees in respect of actions taken against them arising out of the discharge of their official duties.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend will give further consideration to the Greater London council's application for consent when the council responds to my Department's request for additional information.

Housing Programme

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the objectives and priorities of the Government's housing programme.

My John Patten: Our policy is to encourage the maximum spread of owner-occupation, and the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock, while ensuring a vigorous housing association movement.

The Government also hope to introduce legislation to encourage the supply of more homes for renting in the private sector, but probably not during the lifetime of this Parliament.

Inner Cities

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment through which programmes he is giving aid to the inner city areas.

Mr. John Patten: The programmes administered by my Department which specifically benefit inner city areas are the urban programme, including urban development grant, the special grants programme and derelict land grant. Support to local authority main programmes through rate support grant and housing investment programme allocations also take account of the special needs of inner city areas, as does the investment programmes of the Housing Corporation. In addition, my Department supports initiatives which benefit inner city areas through urban development corporations, garden festivals and enterprise zones.

Docklands (House Sales)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give an annual breakdown, since 1981, of all houses sold in docklands and the percentage costing under £40,000.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Landfill Sites

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals have been determined in the last five years after the refusal of planning consent in respect of proposed privately operated landfill sites; and how many of these have been successful.

Mr. Tracey: The information requested is not available. However, if the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, I would be willing to look into it.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if South Killingholme, South Humberside, has been included in the shortlist of potential sites for nuclear waste repositories drawn up by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive.

Mrs. Rumbold: The final list of sites has not yet been received from NIREX. I am not therefore in a position to confirm or deny whether South Killingholme will be included in that list.

Hamilton Development (Leicester)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many representations he has received regarding the proposed Hamilton development in east Leicester; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the current position regarding his consideration of whether to call in the Hamilton development plan in east Leicester.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has received 11 representations about Leicestershire county council's notice of intention to adopt the Hamilton local plan and seven others about the proposals for development at Hamilton included in the submitted alterations to the Leicestershire structure plan.

My right hon. Friend has directed the county council not to adopt the local plan unless he informs it that he has decided not to call in the plan for his own determination. He will make that decision after considering the alterations to the structure plan presently before him, together with all the representations he has received and the recommendations of the panel currently conducting the examination in public of those alterations.

Local Authority Employees (Elections)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his proposals with regard to the election of local authority employees to other local authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer to the reply my right hon. Friend gave on 15 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) at column *313*.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* different press releases were issued, *(b)* press conferences were held and *(c)* different documents or papers relating to information or publicity were issued by his Department in the past 12 months.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the past 12 months my Department, including the Property Services Agency, issued 642 press releases. Major press conferences were held on 14 occasions and many less formal press briefings were given, particularly during Ministerial visits. My Department has issued 76 items of publicity in the last 12 months.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost to his Department of issuing press releases, holding press conferences and issuing documents or papers of information or publicity in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Waldegrave: In 1984-85, the running costs of my Department's information directorate, which are controlled through the MAXIS system, amounted to £2,887,000 including the cost of paid publicity. It is not possible to calculate as separate items within the overall budget the costs of the activities to which the hon. Member refers.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment in what form his Department keeps accounts of its expenditure on publicity; and by what means those accounts are published.

Mr. Waldegrave: In common with other Directorates in my Department, the running costs of the information directorate and the expenditure incurred on paid publicity are set out in the MINIS documents which are published annually. Copies are placed in the Library. Day to day control of expenditure is effected through my Department's MAXIS system of expenditure control. Expenditure on publicity is covered by provision in the Supply Estimates within the central administrative vote for my Department.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of all publicity issued by his Department in connection with Her Majesty's Government's proposals relating to the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department published two booklets, "After the GLC" and "After the MCC's" at a total cost of £13,000. It is not possible to calculate, as a separate item within the Department's publicity budget the cost of press releases which were issued on this subject.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of all publicity issued by his Department in the past 12 months relating to orders under the Rates Act and issues relating thereto.

Mr. Waldegrave: In 1984-85 approximately £420,000 was spent on advertising and the production and distribution of leaflets to inform the public about the Rates Act 1984. No such expenditure has been incurred in this financial year. It is not possible to calculate as a separate item within the publicity budget the cost of press releases which were issued on this subject.

Docklands Policing Secretariat

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the annual estimated cost of the Docklands policing secretariat.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply. The annual estimated cost is £17,881.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the Government's response to the European Community consultative document on reform of the common agricultural policy, the so-called Green Book.

Mr. Gummer: The Government have welcomed this opportunity to review the CAP and in particular the emphasis given in the Commission's Green Paper "Perspectives for the CAP" to a more market-oriented price policy. When the paper was discussed by Community Agriculture Ministers in Luxembourg on 24 September I gave my support to the Commission for putting price policy at the centre of its strategy. Whatever other measures we may consider, either at Community or national level to help agriculture to adjust to the changing situation, they will not succeed unless linked to an effective price policy.

Meat

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the amount provided by his Department to the research programme into the possible health hazards of hormones in meat carried out at the Institute of Animal Research, Berkshire, for each year since the programme's inception; and by how much it is planned to fund the project in the next two financial years.

Mrs. Fenner: Work on developing methodology for the detection of hormone residues in meat, which has relevance to monitoring for health purposes, has been funded by my Department at the Institute for Research on Animal Diseases as part of a programme that was originally directed at improving the efficiency of meat production. For that reason it is not possible to identify separately the cost of this work in its early years but the cost of the programme in 1984-85 was £327,000 and the estimated cost for 1985-86 is approximately £286,000. The financial year 1985-86 will be the last year of funding by the Ministry. Considerable progress has been made in devising methods of detecting hormone residues in animal products and further development for commercial application can now be taken up by the industry. The need for general oversight in this area will be met through work by the Ministry's food science division and the Central Veterinary Laboratory.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the figures for the number of fishing vessels, their size, and what proportion of the British fishing fleet they constitute, based at Great Grimsby, Hull and Fleetwood, at present and for the years 1975 and 1965.

Mr. Gummer: Records of numbers of vessels in the United Kingdom fleet are based on the position at 31 December of each year; hence 1984 is the most recent year for which details are available. The information requested is as follows:

Length Bands (Feet)

	*Under 40**		*40-79·9*		*80-109·9*		*110-139·9*		*Over 140*		*Total*	
	Number	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*	*Number*	*per cent.*
1965												
Grimsby	9	0·1	99	6·8	22	9·5	61	31·6	62	31·6	253	3·1
Hull	2	. .	7	0·5	—	—	1	0·5	116	59·2	126	1·5
Fleetwood	30	0·5	38	2·6	8	3·4	40	20·7	13	6·6	129	1·6
United Kingdom	6,065	100	1,453	100	232	100	193	100	196	100	8,130	100
1975												
Grimsby	12	0·3	150	7·0	7	5·7	47	32·4	41	31·1	257	3·8
Hull	—	—	15	0·7	—	—	1	0·7	75	56·8	91	1·4
Fleetwood	14	0·3	61	2·9	7	5·7	17	11·7	10	7·6	109	1·6
United Kingdom	4,153	100	2,134	100	122	100	145	100	132	100	6,686	100
1984												
Grimsby	2	. .	159	8·2	—	—	11	14·5	1	7·7	173	2·3
Hull	—	—	1	0·1	1	0·8	8	10·5	6	46·2	16	0·2
Fleetwood	20	0·4	53	2·7	4	3·1	2	2·6	—	—	79	1·0
United Kingdom	5,433	100	1,936	100	127	100	76	100	13	100	7,585	100

* Changes in the numbers of vessels under 40 feet are due partly to changes in the definitions used for this sector of the fleet.
. . Indicates less than 0·05 per cent.

Salmon Drift Net Fishery

Mr. Beith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will arrange for a ministerial visit to the Northumberland salmon drift net fishery.

Mr. Gummer: I plan to visit the north east on 18 December. Although the salmon fishing season is over, I expect to have an opportunity to hear the views of those concerned with the fishery.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to facilitate the transfer of milk quotas between producers.

Mr. Gummer: I attach great importance to obtaining better arrangements for the transfer of quota between producers. We have been pressing the Commission to bring forward proposals on this, and shall continue to do so. In the meantime we are exploring the scope for flexibility within the framework of the present Community rules.

Departmental Files (Access)

Mr. Cohen asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Jopling: Access to computer records on individuals held by my Department is restricted by a system of access controls and frequently changed passwords. This is in line with the Central Government Code of Practice No. 21, issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunication Agency.

Manual files on individuals bear an appropriate security classification to protect against unauthorised disclosure and their movement within the Department is recorded in line with Office Procedures.

In both cases access is restricted to staff on a "need to know" basis.

Agricultural Land (Recategorisation)

Mr. Heddle asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to revise the recategorisation of areas of agricuitural land.

Mrs. Fenner: I have no plans for the review of the agricultural land classification system beyond those described in my reply to my hon. Friend on 11 November at column *58*.

Monofilament Drift Nets

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he makes of the danger posed by monofilament drift nets in coastal areas to seabirds; and what steps he takes to monitor the numbers of birds entangled and killed by such nets.

Mr. Gummer: We keep all fishing activities under scrutiny in the course of our surveillance of fisheries. I am aware that fishing nets of any kind occasionally trap and drown sea birds. The evidence available to me suggests that such losses are small and do not endanger populations of sea birds.

Badgers Bovine TB

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to receive the Dunnet review of the problem of bovine tuberculosis and badgers.

Mrs. Fenner: The review of policy is still in progress. I now expect that the review team will be in a position to report to us early in 1986.

Pesticides

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what replies he has had so far to the consultative document on pesticides published in the current month by his Department.

Mrs. Fenner: Since it is very early in the consultation we have received very few replies to the consultative document to date and none from the main representative organisations.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many environmentally sensitive areas he has plans to recognise under the Agriculture Bill.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply,* 15 November 1985, c. *313*]: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary legislation the Government foresee an initial designation of five of six areas in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if existing grants and incentives which support farming and forestry operations will continue to be available in the environmentally sensitive areas which he plans to recognise under the Agriculture Bill.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply,* 15 November 1985, c. *313*]: In conformity with the Government's voluntary approach, we do not envisage a general ban on grants or subsidies in ESAs. But in considering individual cases we shall of course exercise our responsibilities under section 11 of the Countryside Act 1968 in a manner consistent with the objectives of designation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

National Health Service

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers employed under each category of staff in the National Health Service in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* 1983 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is given in the table. Statistics on non-medical manpower are collected for 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December each year, but statistics on medical and dental manpower are collected only for 31 March and 30 September. The latest date for which figures are available is 31 March 1985 for all staff and 30 June 1985 for non-medical staff.

Tables showing the latest staffing figures are regularly placed in the Library, as each quarter's figures become available.

NHS directly-employed staff (England)

*(whole-time equivalents)**

Staff group	*September 1974†*	*September 1979*	*September 1983*	*March 1985*	*June 1985*
Medical and Dental‡	31,500	37,100	40,200	41,000	N/A
Nursing and Midwifery‖	314,100	¶358,400	¶397,100	401,200	400,300
Professional and Technical	43,600	60,100	•68,700	•72,700	72,700
Works	4,700	5,600	6,000	6,100	6,100
Maintenance	17,600	20,100	20,800	20,000	19,800
Administrative and Clerical	82,800	103,000	110,000	110,400	110,700

Staff group	September 1974†	September 1979	September 1983	March 1985	June 1985
Ambulance (including officers)	16,600	17,100	18,400	18,200	18,200
Ancillary	163,400	171,900	•166,200	•146,500	143,400
Total	674,200	773,300	827,400	816,100	N/A

Notes:

* Figures are independently rounded to the nearest 100, and therefore the sum of the component figures may not equal the total shown.

† During the period immediately following the NHS reorganisation on 1 April 1974, the new health authorities faced exceptional difficulties in providing up-to-date information on numbers and types of staff. The accuracy of the September 1974 figures is therefore open to question.

‡ Excludes hospital practitioners and paragraph 94/107 appointments (clinical assistants). Includes locums.

‖ Includes agency nurses and midwives.

¶ Part of the increase between 1979 and 1983 is due to a reduction in the contractual hours of nurses in 1980 from 40 to 37½ hours per week.

• Part of the change between September 1983 and March 1985 is due to the transferring of Operating Department Assistants from the Ancillary to the Professional and Technical 'B' staff group on 1 April 1984.

Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all professional bodies which have been involved with the training, conduct or registration of nurses, midwives and health visitors for each of the past 15 years, indicating his Department's annual contribution to each organisation's funding; and, where known, what proportion this represented of total funding for the body in question.

Mr. Hayhoe: In England, prior to July 1983, the following five professional bodies were involved with the training, conduct or registration of nurses, midwives and health visitors:

General Nursing Council for England and Wales (GNC)

Central Midwives Board (CMB)

Council for the Education and Training of Health Visitors (CETHV)

Joint Board of Clinical Nursing Studies (JBCNS)

Panel of Assessors for District Nurse Training (PADNT)

The first three were statutory bodies.

On 1 July 1983, these bodies were dissolved and their functions taken over by bodies established under the 1979 Nurses, Midwives and Health Visitors Act:

United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (UKCC)

English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting (ENB).

The board took over only those training functions pertaining to England. The funding information requested is in the table.

Funding of professional bodies in £000

	GNC	CMB*	CETHV†	JBCNS‡	PADNT	UKCC‖	ENB¶
1970-71							
a. DHSS funding	6,159	—	110	8	—	—	—
b. Total funding	6,836	—	—	—	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	90%	—	—	—	—	—	—
1971-72							
a. DHSS funding	7,119	72	181	11	—	—	—
b. Total funding	7,874	—	—	—	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	90%	—	—	—	—	—	—
1972-73							
a. DHSS funding	8,249	85	377	38	—	—	—
b. Total funding	9,099	—	112	—	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	91%	—	—	—	—	—	—
1973-74							
a. DHSS funding	9,386	93	82	80	—	—	—
b. Total funding	10,424	—	106	—	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	90%	—	77%	—	—	—	—
1974-75							
a. DHSS funding	13,588	125	121	128	—	—	—
b. Total funding	14,968	—	154	—	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	91%	—	79%	—	—	—	—
1975-76							
a. DHSS funding	19,743	201	178	202	—	—	—
b. Total funding	21,262	—	224	—	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	93%	—	79%	—	—	—	—
1976-77							
a. DHSS funding	23,272	179	246	256	—	—	—
b. Total funding	25,752	—	309	—	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	90%	—	80%	—	—	—	—

	GNC	CMB*	CETHV†	JBCNS‡	PADNT	UKCC§	ENB¶
1977-78							
a. DHSS funding	25,036	194	267	281	—	—	—
b. Total funding	27,780	302	329	286	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	90%	64%	81%	98%	—	—	—
1978-79							
a. DHSS funding	28,968	226	304	312	—	—	—
b. Total funding	31,807	339	375	319	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	91%	67%	81%	98%	—	—	—
1979-80							
a. DHSS funding	34,454	265	360	354	—	—	—
b. Total funding	37,621	386	438	363	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	92%	69%	82%	98%	—	—	—
1980-81							
a. DHSS funding	48,176	367	443	432	—	—	—
b. Total funding	52,139	502	539	442	—	—	—
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	92%	73%	82%	98%	—	—	—
1981-82							
a. DHSS funding	53,059	406	476	495	164	401	519
b. Total funding	58,189	587	695	507	184	455	521
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	91%	69%	81%	98%	89%	88%	99·6%
1982-83							
a. DHSS funding	59,852	412	510	520	147	901	1,013
b. Total funding	64,092	577	644	528	179	1,078	1,013
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	93%	71%	79%	98%	82%	84%	100%
1983-84							
a. DHSS funding	13,521	287	138	115	31	1,133	50,273
b. Total funding	14,332	353	184	119	38	2,774	51,670
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	94%	81%	75%	97%	82%	41%	97%
1984-85							
a. DHSS funding	—	—	—	—	—	266	68,800
b. Total funding	—	—	—	—	—	2,654	68,647
c. (*a*) as percentage of (*b*)	—	—	—	—	—	10%	97%

Notes:

* For CMB total funding figures are not available prior to 1977-78. No funding figure is available for 1970-71 and those for 1971-72 to 1975-76 include a contribution from Wales.

† For CETHV DHSS funding figures for years 1970-71 to 1972-73 include advances to Council for Education and Training in Social Work also. No figures are available for total funding prior to 1972-73.

‡ For JBCNS total funding figures are not available prior to 1977-78.

§ UKCC's first statutory accounts cover the period 1 October 1980 to 31 March 1982 and so the amounts stated under 1981-82 for both DHSS and total funding refer to this eighteen month period.

¶ ENB's first statutory accounts cover the period 1 September 1980 to 31 March 1982 and so the amounts stated under 1981-82 for both DHSS and total funding refer to this nineteen month period.

NHS (Staff Statistics)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* ancillary staff, *(b)* maintenance staff, *(c)* ambulance staff and *(d)* nurses and midwives were working in the National Health Service for each year since 1978, expressed in absolute numbers and as a percentage of total National Health Service staff.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is given in the table.

NHS directly-employed staff: England*
Whole time equivalents

30 September

	1978 WTE	1978 Percentage of total	1979 WTE	1979 Percentage of total	1980 WTE	1980 Percentage of total	1981 WTE	1981 Percentage of total	1982 WTE	1982 Percentage of total	1983 WTE	1983 Percentage of total	1984 WTE	1984 Percentage of total
Ancillary†	172,200	22·7	171,900	22·2	172,600	21·7	172,200	20·9	170,500	20·6	166,300	20·1	152,200‡	18·6
Maintenance	19,900	2·6	20,100	2·6	20,600	2·6	21,000	2·6	21,000	2·5	20,800	2·5	20,200	2·5
Ambulance	17,500	2·3	17,100	2·2	17,600	2·2	18,200	2·2	18,300	2·2	18,400	2·2	18,100	2·2
Nursing and Midwifery‡	391,000	46·2	359,400	46·5	370,100	46·7	391,800	47·6	397,100	47·9	391,100	48·0	397,500	48·6
Other Staff§	199,100	26·2	205,800	26·6	211,500	26·7	219,200	26·7	221,600	26·7	224,900	27·3	229,200	28·0
Total	759,700	100·0	773,300	100·0	791,900	100·0	822,400	100·0	828,500	100·0	827,400	100·0	817,200	100·0

* Whole time equivalents shown rounded to the nearest 100. Percentage based on unrounded figures. Because of rounding, the sum of the component group may differ from the total.

† At 1 April 1984, operating Department Assistants transferred from the Ancillary to the Professional and Technical staff group. Figures for 1984 are therefore not directly comparable with those for earlier years.

‡ Includes agency staff.

§ Administrative and clerical, medical and dental (includes locums), professional and technical staff.

Retirement (Equality of Treatment)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in view of the European Court's ruling on the right of women to work to the same age as men, he will introduce legislation to give equal treatment to men and women in respect of the basic state retirement pension.

Mr. Major: We have no present plans to equalise pension ages for men and women. However, the Government do recognise that flexibility within the present pension scheme would benefit some individuals and I refer my hon. Friend to the Green Paper on the reform of social security which suggested, as one way of bringing the rights of men and women closer together, a system of flexible retirement and invited views on how this might be achieved without imposing unacceptably high extra costs.

Hospital Pharmacy Technicians

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how the remuneration of hospital pharmacy technicians for out of hours service compares with that for hospital pharmacists.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows:

Item	*Period*	*Hospital pharmacists*	*Pharmacy technicians*
Late clinic fee	Any	£4.17 per hour	Not available.
Overtime	Weekdays or Saturdays	Time off in lieu of hours worked	Time off in lieu or payment at 1½ plain time rate.
Overtime	Sunday	£4.17 per hour	Time off in lieu or payment at double time rate
Overtime	Public or Statutory holidays	£4.17 per hour plus time off in lieu	Day off in lieu plus payment at double time rate
On call (at home)	Any	Not available	£4.83
Standby (at hospital)	Any	Not available	£6.75
Emergency duty	Weekdays or Saturdays	Time off in lieu of hours worked	Payment for work done at rate of: For first 2 hours or part thereof, equivalent of 2 hours salary plus 50 per cent.; thereafter one eighth of that rate for each complete 15 minutes in the Department
Emergency duty	Sunday	Sunday overtime rates	Payment for work done at rate of: for first 2 hours or part thereof, equivalent to twice 2 hours salary. Thereafter one eighth of that rate for each complete 15 minutes in the Department
Emergency duty	Public and statutory holidays	Public and statutory holiday overtime rates	Payment at Sunday emergency duty rate plus day off in lieu

Hospital Building Programme

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the information contained in his letter and enclosure to the hon. Member for Hazel Grove on 14 October giving current details of the national hospital building programme.

Mr. Whitney: The table lists schemes in England, each costing over £2 million, that are currently at the planning, design or construction stage. These schemes represent a commitment by the Government of over £1 billion on hospital or other health building.

Schemes over £2 million in planning, design and under construction

Region	*Project/Scheme*
	PLANNING
Northern	Ashington Low Energy Hospital (Nucleus)
	North Tyneside Scheme 3 Phase 1
	Sunderland General Scheme 2 Phase 2
	Sunderland General Scheme 2 Phase 3
Trent	Derby City Phase 2
	Glenfield District General Hospital Phase 2
	Kendray Hospital Phase 2
	Kings Mill District General Hospital Phase 3
	Lincoln County Phase 2
North West Thames	Clayponds Geriatric Unit
	Ealing Maternity Department
North East Thames	Coppetts Wood
South West Thames	Bognor Community Hospital
	Royal Surrey County Guildford Phase 2
Oxford	Milton Keynes District General Hospital Phase 2
	Stoke Mandeville—Plastic Surgery and Burns Unit
	Stoke Mandeville Phase 4
West Midlands	Anchor Meadow Community Hospital
	Bromsgrove Community Hospital

Region	Project/Scheme
	Burton-on-Trent District General Hospital Phase 2
	East Birmingham Obstetrics
	Kidderminster District General Hospital Phase 6
	Lichfield and Tamworth District General Hospital (Nucleus)
	Rowley Regis Community Hospital Sandwell
North Western	Ormskirk District General Hospital Phase 1
Non Regional Hospital Area	Porton Down Fermentation Pilot Plant
	DESIGN
Northern	Furness General Scheme 2 Phase 1
	Hartlepool District General Hospital Scheme 3 Phase 1
	Hartlepool District General Hospital Scheme 3 Phase 2
	Kendal (Westmorland) General Scheme 1 Phase 1
	North Tyneside Scheme 2 Phase 1
	Royal Victoria Infirmary Scheme 1 Phase 5
	South Shields General Scheme 3 Phase 1
Yorkshire	Scunthorpe District General Hospital Phase 3B Accident and Emergency Block
	St. James University Hospital Leeds New Renal Unit
Trent	Bolsover Community Hospital Development
	Chesterfield and North Derby Royal Hospital Phase 2B
	Coalville Community Hospital
	Leicester Royal Infirmary Phase 4B
	Northern General Geriatric
East Anglian	Ipswich Phase 3 Heath Road Wing (Nucleus)
North West Thames	Central Middlesex Psychiatric Unit
	St. Albans City Hospital Development Phase 2
North East Thames	Whittington Redevelopment Phase 1
South East Thames	Bassetts Residential Centre—MH Services
	Eastbourne New District General Hospital Phase 2
	Hastings District General Hospital Phase 1
	Medway District General Hospital Phase 3B
	Medway District General Hospital Phase 3C
South West Thames	Mid Sussex Phase 1
Wessex	Royal United Bath—Operating Theatres
	St. Marys—Isle of Wight—Phase 3B (Nucleus)
Oxford	John Radcliffe—Additional Wards
	Milton Keynes—MI Unit
	Milton Keynes District General Hospital—OPD
South Western	Frenchay District General Hospital Phase 1
	Gloucester Royal Phase 4B
	Gloucester Royal Phase 4B Sub-Phases 1 and 2
West Midlands	Bradwell New Geriatric Unit (Nucleus)
	Cannock Community Hospital
	Edward Street—Pyschiatric/Geriatric
	Good Hope Phase 2
	Good Hope Phase 3
	Queen Elizabeth Birmingham—Reg. Specialties/Laboratories
	R J A H Wards and Theatres
	Warwick District General Hospital—Phase 1 (Nucleus)
Mersey	Alder Hey—Child Health Institute
	Broadgreen Development Phase 1
	St. Catherine's Birkenhead Redevelopment Phase 1
	St. Helens Redevelopment Phase 1 Boiler House
	Warrington District General Hospital Phase 1
North Western	Bolton District General Hospital ESMI and Geriatric Unit
	Bolton District General Hospital Manufacturing Pharmacy and HSDU
	Bolton District General Hospital Phase 1
	Fairfield Catering and HSDU
	Fylde Community Hospital
	Leigh Infirmary Phase 1
	Manchester Royal Infirmary Phase 2
	Manchester Royal Infirmary Service Complex
	North Manchester General Boiler House
	Peel Hall ESMI
	Pendle Community Hospital
	Queens Park Blackburn Phase 2 Geriatric
	Whalley Hospital Phase 1
Non Regional Hospital Area	Moorfields Eye Hospital—Redevelopment Phase 2B
	National Heart and Chest Centre Brompton Phase 1
	UNDER CONSTRUCTION
Northern	Blyth Community Hospital and Health Centre
	Fenham Blood Transfusion Service Centre
	Freeman Hospital
	Palmer Community Hospital Jarrow

Region	Project Scheme
	South Cleveland General Scheme 2 Phase 1B
Yorkshire	Bradford Royal Infirmary Nucleus Wards and Theatres
	Bridlington New Community Hospital
	Friarage Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)
	Goole New Community Hospital
	Regional Blood Transfusion Centre Seacroft Phase 1
	Scarborough District General Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)
	Scunthorpe District General Hospital Phase 3A Service Centre
	Stanncliffe District General Hospital Phase 1 (Nucleus)
Trent	Derby City Phase 1
	Derby Royal Infirmary Phase 2
	Ilkeston Community Hospital
	Kings Mill District General Hospital Phase 2
	Lincoln County M.I.U.—Phase 1C
	Lincoln County Phase 1A and 1B
	Northern General Phase 1C
	Pilgrim (Boston)—Phase 3
	Victoria Mansfield—Phase 1
East Anglian	Peterborough Second District General Hospital Phase 1
	West Suffolk Bury St. Edmunds Stage 1
North West Thames	Hemel Hempstead Phase 1
	St. Mary's W 2—Phase 1B
North East Thames	Harold Wood Hospital Phase 1
	Homerton (Eastern) Phase 1
South East Thames	Buckland District General Hospital
	Lewisham District General Hospital Phase 1A
	Lewisham District General Hospital Phase 1B
South West Thames	St. Georges Block H Phase 2A
Wessex	Andover Community Hospital
	Bournemouth District General Hospital Phase 1
	Royal Hants County Winchester Phase 4 (Nucleus)
	Royal South Hants Southampton Phase 3
	Royal United—Bath
	West Dorset District General Hospital Phase 1
Oxford	Heatherwood MI/EMI
	Wexham Park EMI/MI
South Western	Cheltenham General Phase 1B
	West Somerset (Musgrove Park) District General Hospital Phase 1
	Weston-super-Mare New Hospital
West Midlands	Bromsgrove Redditch District General Hospital Phase 1 Contract 2 (Nucleus)
	Cheadle New Geriatric Unit
	City General Stoke Surgical Accommodation (Nucleus)
	George Eliot Nuneaton Phase 2 (Nucleus)
	Good Hope Phase 1
	New Cross Wolverhampton Wards 1 and 2 (Nucleus)
	Rubery Hill Regional Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit
	Telford District General Hospital Phase 1
	Walsall Phases 4A and 4B (Nucleus)
	Walsgrave Radiotherapy Treatment Unit
	Wordsley—Obstetrics
Mersey	North Sefton District General Hospital Southport Phase 1 (Nucleus)
North Western	Blackpool Victoria Phase 4
	Burnley General Hospital Phase 3
	Fairfield Phase 1
	Fleetwood ESMI
	Oldham District General Hospital Phase 1
	Park Hospital Geriatric and Rehabilitation
	Queens Park Blackburn Phase 1 Paediatric
	Royal Albert Edward Infirmary Wigan Phase 1
	Tameside General Phase 2
Non Regional Hospital Area	Blood Products Manufacturing Unit Elstree
	Clare Hall Project
	Hammersmith Hospital Redevelopment Phase 1

Chiropody (Grimsby)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how long is the current waiting list for chiropody treatment at health centres in Great Grimsby.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collected centrally.

Woolwich Office

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the educational qualifications of the staff employed at the Woolwich office of his Department.

Mr. Major: Information about the educational qualifications held by staff in local offices of the Department is not readily available.

The minimum educational qualifications for recruitment to the basic clerical grade—clerical assistant—are two passes at GCE 'O' level, or equivalent, including English language. For recruitment to the executive officer grade, the minimum educational qualifications are five GCE 'O' level, or equivalent, passes including English language, and two 'A' level passes, both of which must be obtained at the same examination.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of persons excepted from paying national insurance contributions from self-employment due to having small earnings, in each of the years 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, 1984-85 and the current year to date.

Mr. Major: A count is made annually of the number of small earnings exceptions (SEEs) current in the last week of the contribution year. The latest available figures are:

Year	*No. of SEEs*
1979-80	27,500
1980-81	29,500
1981-82	27,100
1982-83	39,100

Due to the industrial action at the Department's Newcastle computer centre last year, the figures for 1983-84 and 1984-85 are not available.

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the direct revenue effect in 1986-87 of changing the rates of class 1 national insurance contributions in all earnings bands by one percentage point; and if he will show separately the effect on employers' and employees' contributions.

Mr. Major: On the assumptions set out in his report on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985 (Cmnd. 9672) the Government Actuary's estimates of the revenue effect of a one per cent. change in both the primary and secondary contribution rates are:

£ million

	Employees' (primary) contributions	*Employers' (secondary) contributions*
Band 1	30	40
Band 2	75	85
Band 3	1,190	225
Band 4	—	1085

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assumptions were used by the Government Actuary in preparing the autumn statement 1985 about the numbers of class 1 national insurance contributors in each of the earnings bands proposed for 1986-87, their aggregate earnings and about the proportion that are contracted out of the state earnings related pension scheme.

Mr. Major: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Departmental Offices, Erdington

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current weekly rate of application for each of the principal benefits at his Department's office at Kingsbury road, Erdington, Birmingham; and how this compares with the position one and two years ago.

Mr. Major: The table shows the average weekly rate of claims made for principal benefits during October 1985, 1984 and 1983 at the Department's office in Erdington.

Benefit	*Average Weekly Claims*		
	October 1985	*October 1984*	*October 1983*
Sickness/invalidity benefit	56	56	65
Maternity allowance	21	13	28
Retirement pension	45	56	33
Widows benefit	5	5	5
Death grant	30	30	30
Industrial disablement benefit	6	5	4
Supplementary benefit	342	287	419

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of current payments of each of the principal benefits being made at his Department's office at Kingsbury road, Erdington, Birmingham; and how this compares with the position one and two years ago.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of payments made to claimants by the Department's office in Erdington during the four week period ending 22 October 1985—the latest available figures—and for the same periods one and two years ago.

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Supplementary Benefits			
Order books	2,750	2,193	1,850
Girocheques	3,635	3,003	3,024
Contributory Benefits			
Short term benefit (sickness and invalidity benefit, maternity allowance and severe disablement benefit)			
Order books	352	407	621
Girocheques	4,055	3,544	3,832

	1983	1984	1985
Long term benefits (retirement pension, widows benefit, disablement benefit and child benefit)			
Order books	included in the figure for short term benefit order book issues.	207	included in the figure for short term order books issued.
Girocheques	included in the figure given for short-term benefit giros	5,263	1,792

Note:
1. Supplementary benefit payments do not include instructions issued to Unemployment Benefit offices to pay benefit on the Department's behalf.
2. Separate figures for short and long term benefit giro issues for 1983, and order books for 1983 and 1985 are not available.
3. It is not possible to provide a further breakdown of contributory benefit payments into the individual national insurance benefits paid by the local office.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is currently the average time taken by his Department's office at Kingsbury road, Erdington, Birmingham, to process new claims for single payments; and how this compares with the position one and two years ago.

Mr. Major: Claims for single payments are determined as soon as possible after all the information required has been collected. A limited sample of recent cases at Erdington local office suggests that on average, claims for single payments are currently being determined 8-9 days after their receipt.

Similar figures for 1984 and 1983 are not available.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is currently the average time taken to deal with new benefit claims from *(a)* householders and *(b)* non-householders at his Department's office at Kingsbury road, Erdington, Birmingham; and how this compares with the position one and two years ago.

Mr. Major: Information is not broken down in the form requested. The latest available figures show that the average time taken to deal with all new supplementary benefit claims at the Department's office in Erdington is 11 days, as it was at the same time last year and the year before. The figures are not broken down between types of claim.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what changes, by grade and number, there have been in staffing at his Department's office at Kingsbury road, Erdington, Birmingham, compared with 1984 and 1983, including temporary staff.

Mr. Major: The following table sets out staff in post by grade on 1 April for the last three years, and the situation on 1 November 1985.

Grade	1.4.83	1.4.84	1.4.85	1.11.85
Principal	1	1	1	1
Senior Executive Officer	1	1	1	1
Higher Executive Officer	7	7	7	7
Local Officer 1	41	42	44	46·5
Local Officer 2	80	78	88	86
Clerical Assistant	29	28	30	29·5
Typist	3	3	3	4
Telephonist	1	1	1	1
Security Guard	2	1	2	2
Messenger	1	1	—	1
Total Permanent Staff)	166	163	177	179
Casual Staff (Clerical Assistants)	9	2	2	1

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will estimate the number of current claimants of each of the principal benefits administered from his Department's offices at Kingsbury road, Erdington, Birmingham, and Walsall road, Birmingham, who live in the Erdington parliamentary constituency; and how this compares with the position one, two and five years ago.

Mr. Major: The Erdington constituency is covered for social security purposes by two of the Department's offices but their boundaries are not conterminous with those of the constituency. The number of claimants receiving supplementary benefits from these offices in July 1985—the latest available figures—and at the same period one and two years ago were:

	1983	1984	1985
Birmingham, Erdington	15,733	16,293	17,280
Birmingham, Perry Barr	11,246	11,284	11,449

No information is available for the position 5 years ago. Details of claimants receiving national insurance benefits are not available in the form requested.

Nurses (Accommodation Charges)

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the accommodation charges for nurses in the following categories: *(a)* first year nurse, *(b)* second year nurse, *(c)* third year nurse, *(d)* enrolled nurse, *(e)* staff nurse II, *(f)* sister II on 1 April 1984 and 1 October, together with the percentage increases in each case; and if there are any plans to increase such charges.

Mr. Hayhoe: Under an agreement between National Health Service management and the staff organisations lodging charges for nurses and midwives are set nationally each April at a level designed to reflect the full economic cost of providing the accommodation. Charges depend on the type of occupation not the grade of the occupant, although students and pupil nurses occupying the simplest type of accommodation receive an automatic abatement of 40 per cent. and the national charges may be reduced locally by up to 40 per cent. where accommodation is not up to a reasonably acceptable standard.

The table shows the charges for the various grades of accommodation as from 1 April 1984 and from 1 April

1985; under the terms of the agreement charges will be revised from 1 April 1986 taking account of movements in rents and other relevant costs to October 1985.

Grade of Accommodation	Charges as from 1 April '84 £	Charges as from 1 April '85 £	Increase 1984-85 £	Increase 1984-85 Percentage
A. Bed sitting rooms with 4-6 sharing common facilities				
Students and pupils	463	486	23	5
Other staff	771	810	39	5
B. Bed sitting rooms with 3-4 sharing common facilities	920	966	46	5
C. 1 Bedroom and living room each, with 2 sharing common facilities	1,362	1,430	68	5
D. 1 Bedroom self-contained flat	1,952	2,050	98	5

Child Care (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many day care places are available for children in Hampshire; and what are the comparative figures for each year 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table. Further details are given in the Department's publication "Children's Day Care Facilities—at 31 March 1983" copies of which are available in the Library.

Hampshire-Provision of Day Care Places for Children under Five
Number of places

As at 31 March	In day nurseries	In playgroups	With childminders	Total
1979	357	16,360	4,945	21,662
1980	359	14,629	5,053	20,041
1981	339	15,421	5,321	21,081
1982	311	14,716	5,032	20,059
1983	301	15,679	4,524	20,504
1984	315	15,966	4,823	21,104
1985	315	16,923	5,557	22,795

Geriatric Beds (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many acute geriatric beds there are in each Hampshire hospital presently; and what are the comparative figures for each year from 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hypothermia (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths from hypothermia there have been in Portsmouth and Hampshire, respectively, in the past year.

Mr. Whitney: The number of deaths registered between 1 January 1985 and 1 November 1985 with a mention of hypothermia on the death certificate to residents of Portsmouth and Hampshire are six and seventeen respectively.

Hospital Beds (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of hospital beds in Portsmouth for the latest available date and also for each year since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: The requested information is given in the table. The number of in-patient cases treated per available bed per year increased from 16·2 to 20·5 between 1979 and 1984.

NHS hospitals, Portsmouth and South East Hampshire District Health Authority

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Average daily number of available beds	3,058	3,032	3,037	3,028	2,978	2,835

Hospital Waiting Lists (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is now the total number of people on hospital waiting lists in the Hampshire health districts by specialty.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is in terms of district health authorities. This is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list for admission to NHS hospitals in Hampshire at 31 March 1985

Specialty	Number
Salisbury DHA *	
Rheumatology	23
Geriatrics	20
General Surgery	715
ENT	248
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	659
Ophthalmology	304
Plastic surgery	2,865
Oral surgery	372
Gynaecology	604
Total	5,810
West Surrey and North East Hampshire DHA*	
General surgery	871
ENT	766
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	1,342
Ophthalmology	509
Urology	419
Oral surgery	55

Specialty	Number
Gynaecology	647
Other specialist units total	73
Total	4,682
Southampton and South West Hampshire DHA	
General medicine	24
Dermatology	8
Neurology	94
Cardiology	221
Rheumatology	44
Geriatrics	88
General surgery	2,056
ENT	1,797
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	1,143
Ophthalmology	679
Radiotherapy	14
Urology	512
Thoracic surgery	79
Oral surgery	908
Neurosurgery	134
Gynaecology	686
Mental handicap	15
GP other	8
Other specialist units	222
Total	8,732
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire DHA	
General medicine	51
Dermatology	16
Rheumatology	10
Geriatrics	9
General surgery	927
ENT	1,152
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	1,073
Ophthalmology	480
Radiotherapy	10
Urology	844
Oral surgery	405
Gynaecology	1,145
Mental handicap	6
Total	6,128
Winchester DHA	
Rheumatology	3
Geriatrics	12
General surgery	493
ENT	321
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	821
Ophthalmology	291
Urology	68
Oral surgery	177
Gynaecology	210
GP dental	1
Total	2,397
Basingstoke and North Hampshire DHA	
General surgery	468
ENT	365
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	1,628
Ophthalmology	231
Thoracic surgery	16
Oral surgery	212
Gynaecology	359
Total	3,279

* DHA lies partly within Hampshire.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many women are on hospital waiting lists in Portsmouth and the South East Hampshire health district for gynaecological treatment;

(2) how many people in Portsmouth and the South East Hampshire health district awaiting urgent operations have been on the hospital waiting list for more than a month;

(3) what is the average length of the waiting list for non-emergency orthopaedic cases in South East Hampshire and Portsmouth respectively.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. On 31 March 1985, the latest date for which information is available centrally, there were in Portsmouth and South East Hampshire District health authority 1,145 cases on in-patient waiting lists in the specialty of gynaecology and 1,052 non-urgent cases in the orthopaedic specialty. A total of 102 urgent cases in the surgical specialties had been waiting for more than a month.

Research Projects

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list any research projects he is funding, has funded or intends to fund on *(a)* Alzheimer's disease, *(b)* osteomalacia and *(c)* kidney disorders.

Mr. Whitney: The list of projects funded currently or in the recent past by the Department is as follows:

a. *Alzheimer's disease:*

The Department has commissioned in recent years a substantial body of research on the care of the elderly mentally infirm, of the confused and of those suffering from dementia—among which are included, of course, people with Alzheimer's disease. Among these are (i) The Supporters of Confused Elderly People at Home (Enid Levin, National Institute for Social Work (Report 1983) and (ii) Specialist Services for the Elderly. A study of Referrals to Geriatric, Psychiatric and Social Services (David Wilkin et al, University of Manchester) (Report 1984.)

b. *Osteomalacia:*

The Social Medicine and Health Services Research Unit, St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School, London (Professor W. Holland): (i) The value of plasma calcium, phosphate and alkaline phosphatase measurements in the diagnosis of histological osteomalacia (1982). (ii) Value of the history in diagnosing osteomalacia among Asians presenting to the Health Service (1983).

c. *Kidney disorders:*

1. St. Thomas's Hospital, London (Dr. A. J. Wing and Dr. S. Challah): Study of Referral Patterns of Patients with Chronic Renal Failure for Dialysis and Transplantation in the UK (1983-84).

2. The Social Medicine and Health Services Research Unit, St. Thomas's Hospital Medical School, London (Professor W. Holland): (i) Negative selection of patients for dialysis and transplantation in the UK. (1983-84).

(ii) Evaluation of the Lithotripter Study (April 1985 to 1988).

(3) Guy's Hospital Medical School, London (Professor H. Keen): Primary Prevention of Renal Disease and Postponement of End-Stage Renal Failure in Diabetic Patients (1984-89).

We have no immediate plans to fund further research in these fields though consideration is currently being given to research proposals concerned with aspects of kidney disorders.

I understand that the Medical Research Council, which receives an annual grant-in-Aid from the Department of Education and Science, is also at present funding research relevant to these conditions.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many social security or industrial injury claimants requiring medical examinations have been referred to private hospitals in England and Wales and Scotland; what is the cost involved for each patient and to which hospitals the patients have been referred.

Mr. Major: To enable the statutory adjudicating authorities to determine a claim for benefit, medical examination by a consultant may be necessary. The place of the examination is entirely a matter for the consultant concerned, and information is not held centrally on how many take place in private hospitals.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how long after a claim is registered he anticipates a decision will be made about exercising the discretionary powers proposed in the revised draft board and lodging regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The time taken to reach a decision will depend on the circumstances of the individual case including the degree of urgency. Staff will be instructed to refer cases involving time limits to headquarters by telephone.

Clinical Academic Staff

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the effect on the National Health Service of clinical academic staff posts remaining vacant because of a lack of suitable applicants.

Mr. Hayhoe: While I am aware of recent reports of such difficulties in recruitment I have no current evidence of significant failure to maintain National Health Service patient services associated with these difficulties.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the role of clinical academic staff in the provision of patient care in the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Clinical academics make a welcome contribution to patient care just as National Health Service doctors contribute to the teaching of medical schools, with mutual benefit.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of patient care is carried out by clinical academic staff in the acute services in teaching districts and in the specialty of pathology.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information in the form requested is not available. We estimate National Health Service honorary medical staff, who are mainly clinical academics, are about 4 per cent. of the overall total and about 15 per cent. in pathology. (Both percentages are whole-time equivalent.) The proportions would be higher in teaching districts.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received about maintaining parity of salaries between university clinical staff and their National Health Service colleagues;

(2) what representations he has received from clinical academic staff about the non-implementation of their 1985 salary increase.

Mr. Brooke: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has received representations on these matters from hon. Members, from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, the Association of University Teachers and the British Medical Association, and from individual members of university clinical staff.

Doctors (Pay)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which groups within the medical professions have not received a salary increase for 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: None whose remuneration is within my departmental responsibility.

Food Poisoning

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the number of people who have died from food poisoning in National Health Service hospitals in each of the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of deaths occurring in National Health Service hospitals in England and Wales, where the underlying cause of death was food poisoning*, are shown in the table for each of the last five years.

These statistics are for place of death; the location of the patient at the time of the acquisition of the infection is not known to the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.

Number of deaths from food poisoning in National Health Service hospitals in England and Wales, 1980-84*

Year	Number
1980	36
1981	36
1982	62
1983	44
1984	53

* ICD codes 003 'other salmonella infections'
005 'other food poisoning (bacterial)'
988 'toxic effect of noxious substances eaten as food'
(Excludes typhoid, paratyphoid and dysentery.)

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the additional cost likely to be incurred by the National Health Service if Crown immunity were abolished.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Private Residential Homes

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will specify the number of local authorities which have appointed registration officers for private residential homes; and what qualifications are needed for appointment to these posts.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 30 October at column *578*.

Thames Regional Health Authorities

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what facilities have been developed in the four Thames regions to treat the following groups of patients, namely, drug misusers, the elderly, those suffering from mental illness and the mentally-handicapped since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Water

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to issue advice to health authorities on the effects of acidification of waters on the aluminium content of potable supplies.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Newhall Hostel, Liverpool

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on the future of the Newhall hostel for the mentally handicapped in Liverpool;

(2) what alternative arrangements he has made for the mentally handicapped who will be affected by the closure of the Newhall hostel in Liverpool.

Mr. Whitney: This is a matter which is the responsibility of the local authority.

Widows

Mr. Adams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase widows' pensions and war widows' pensions in the current financial year; and if he has any plans to pay any lump sum at Christmas.

Mr. Major: Yes. Widows' and war widows' pensions will increase by seven per cent. on 25 November 1985, and the £10 Christmas bonus will be paid to all widows, retirement pensioners and other long-term benefit recipients in the week beginning 2 December 1985.

Finer Report

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the recommendations of the Finer report have been implemented.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Human Tissue

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will order his officials to investigate alleged breaches of the code of conduct advised in the Peel report 1972 on the use of foetal material; if he will press charges against those in breach of such guidelines under the Human Tissue Act; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is still satisfied that there is no evidence available to his Department to substantiate allegations of a trade in human foetal material;

(3) what action he has taken after receipt of correspondence from Celaton Laboratory Research dated 6 December 1984 and Jacobson Chemicals Ltd. dated 21 January 1985 to Mr. R. Aitken, offering to supply foetal material for cosmetics, sent by the hon. Member for Belfast, South.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply* 11 November 1985, c. *94*]: Officials are investigating the allegations made in the BBC television programme "Tomorrow's World" on 31 October, with Celaton Laboratory Research and Jacobson Chemicals and no other evidence has been received relating to an alleged trade in human foetal material. The code of practice contained in the Peel report was drawn up to guide the medical and nursing professions in the use of foetuses and foetal material for research. It is non-statutory, and any proven breach would be for the bodies statutorily responsible for disciplinary matters in those professions to consider. The Human Tissue Act does not apply to the use of foetuses or foetal tissue where the foetus was delivered dead before 28 weeks gestation.

Liver Transplants

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many *(a)* National Health Service hospitals and *(b)* private hospitals have facilities to carry out liver transplants;

(2) whether there has been any cutback in the beds used for liver transplant work because the health authority had insufficient resources to staff them.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. *202*]: The operating theatre and intensive care facilities necessary for liver transplantations are available in a very large number of NHS and private hospitals; the important factor is the availability of appropriately trained and experienced staff. Within the National Health Service, the supra regional arrangements encourage the concentration of this expertise within the designated supra regional centres. I am not aware that in any of these centres beds are specifically allocated to liver transplantation, so the question of unstaffed beds does not arise. Information about facilities in private hospitals is not available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Commuters (Tax Relief)

Mr. Murphy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received advocating the introduction of tax relief for commuters in respect of transport costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The cost of travel between home and a person's normal place of work is a personal expense and does not qualify for tax relief. An employee is not entitled to relief because the expenses are not incurred in the performance of his duties, and a self-employed person is not entitled to it because the expenses are not incurred exclusively for the purposes of the trade or profession. Only a very few representations on this subject have been received in the last year.

Investors in Industry

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the extent of the public stake in Investors in Industry.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government hold no direct stake, but the Bank of England holds 15·02 per cent. of the shares of Investors in Industry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Bank of England retains a nominee director on the board of Investors in Industry.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No; but, coincidentally, a member of the board of Investors in Industry is a non-executive director of the Bank of England.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Bank of England takes to monitor the affairs and lending policy of Investors in Industry.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As one of its major shareholders the Bank of England keeps in close touch with the general management of Investors in Industry but as a matter of policy takes no part in lending or investment decisions.

Pound Sterling (Exchange Rates)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the value of the pound sterling in relation to *(a)* the US dollar, *(b)* the French franc and *(c)* the deutschmark for each year since 1955.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The average exchange rates for sterling against the US dollar, the deutschmark and the French franc in the 10 months to end-October 1985 are as follows:

	Average exchange rate
Dollar/sterling	1·267
Deutschmark/sterling	3·803
French franc/sterling	11·61

Annual averages for the years 1955 to 1983 are published in *Economic Trends*, annual supplement, 1985, p. 142, and for 1984, in the October edition of *Economic Trends*, p. 50.

Interest Rates

Ms. Clare Short asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide comparable information on the level of interest rates for each year since 1955.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Information on the Bank rate/minimum lending rate from June 1932 until the minimum lending rate was suspended in August 1981, and on London clearing banks' base rates from September 1971 to August 1984 is published in *Economic Trends* 1985 annual supplement, pages 194 and 195. Information on the latter is continued on page 66 of the October 1985 edition of *Economic Trends*.

VAT

Mr. Hancock asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if there are currently any plans to remove value added tax on the sale of British Legion poppies;

(2) how much money has been collected from the value added tax on British Legion poppies since value added tax was introduced;

(3) if he will introduce legislation to remove value added tax from the sale of flags and emblems for charitable purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Flags and emblems, including Remembrance Day poppies, are considered to be tokens given in recognition of a donation. Neither the giving of a token in recognition of a donation nor the donation itself is subject to value added tax.

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *68*, if he will specify the categories covered by the term other supplies in relation to the taxation at the standard rate of human organs or tissue.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to the reply*, 15 November 1985, c. *319*]: The term "other supplies" in the answer by my hon. Friend the Minister of State of 11 November referred to any supplies of the goods concerned falling outside the conditions for exemption from VAT. Such supplies, if any, are not categorised or recorded separately.

VAT (Staff Disciplinary Procedures)

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Customs and Excise employees involved on value added tax work have been subject to disciplinary procedures in each of the last 10 years *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the Halifax office and *(c)* in the Peterborough office.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* different press releases were issued, *(b)* press conferences were held and *(c)* different documents or papers relating to information or publicity were issued by his Department in the past 12 months.

Mr. MacGregor: During the year ended 31 March 1985, the Treasury issued 205 press releases; press conferences, briefings and interviews were held regularly throughout the year; and 10 issues of "Economic Progress Report" were published.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to his Department of issuing press releases, holding press conferences and issuing documents or papers of information or publicity in the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor: About £200,000.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what form his Department keeps accounts of its expenditure on publicity; and by what means those accounts are published.

Mr. MacGregor: This expenditure is part of the cost of the Treasury's information division, spending on which totalled £508,000 in 1984-85. The total costs of the information division are subsumed under subhead B1 of the Estimate for Ecomomic and Financial Administration (HM Treasury): class XIII, Vote 4 and are published annually in the Appropriation Account.

Sub-Saharan Africa (Debt and Interest Repayments)

Mr. Blair asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to how much British banks receive by way of debt and interest repayments from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 November 1985, c. *274*]: No comprehensive published information is available for British banks' receipts of debt and interest repayments from countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, table 15 in the Bank of England's *Quarterly Bulletin* shows outstanding

consolidated claims of United Kingdom registered monetary sector institutions (including their branches and subsidiaries worldwide) on certain individual African countries, a maturity analysis of which is also given. Table 14 in the *Bulletin* gives figures for the stock of United Kingdom claims and liabilities on a larger number of African countries of United Kingdom monetary sector and other financial institutions (not including branches and subsidiaries abroad).

DEFENCE

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been charged with criminal offences; and how many have been convicted since its inception.

Mr. Lee: As I explained in reply to the hon. Member on 26 July, at c. *879*, no statistics are available covering all types of criminal offence. Some information is, however, available on convictions relating to serious crimes of violence.

Following my earlier answer, further cases have been identified and, since 1970, we now have records of 11 UDR members or ex-members who have been convicted of murder and six of manslaughter. In addition, 99 have been convicted of assault since 1978. The great majority of these offences were of a domestic nature.

North Sea (Aircraft Incident)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the incident in October in which British aircraft belonging to his Department were involved in a near miss with a Piper Aztec of Kondair over the North sea.

Mr. Stanley: In accordance with usual practice, the pilot's report of this incident is under investigation by the joint airmiss working group of the national air traffic service. As to whether or not MOD aircraft were involved, it would not be right for me to comment in advance of the conclusion of the joint airmiss working group's investigation.

Feral Pigeons (Woolwich Arsenal)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many attempts have been made to cull feral pigeons at Woolwich Arsenal during the current year; how many pigeons have been killed; what has been the effect on other wild birds; and whether the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was given prior notification in each case;

(2) what representations have been received from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals about the culling of pigeons at Woolwich Arsenal; and what reply has been given.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Three culls of feral pigeons have taken place at Woolwich Arsenal in 1985. One hundred and thirty-five pigeons were killed and no other wild birds were affected on these occasions. Under the terms of the licence granted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the regional pests control office was notified 10 days in advance that a cull would take place. This officer attended the cull on two of the three occasions. There is no requirement to give precise prior notification to the RSPCA and none was given.

On June 1985 a local inspector of the RSPCA inquired about the method of culling and the effects on other birds. Later that month officials at Woolwich Arsenal met the inspector and he declared himself satisfied with the methods employed.

HMS Otter and Euryalus

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how, in terms of cost and time, the contract provisions for the refurbishment for HMS Otter and HMS Euryalus compare with the cost and length of refurbishment times for similar work carried out by royal naval dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The comparison of the commercial refits of Her Majesty's ships Otter and Euryalus against those of similar ships refitted in Devonport dockyard will include an assessment of the variations in costs and time taken. The study is not yet complete.

Mungham Report

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to publish the report of the committee for relations between Government, the armed services and the media in times of conflict, under the chairmanship of Mr. Geoff Mungham.

Mr. Stanley: The report which we commissioned from the Centre for Journalism Studies at University College, Cardiff, has been received and is being studied. The authors have the right to publish the report, subject to security considerations. My right hon. Friend also intends to place a non-classified version of this report in the Library in due course.

Establishments (Location and Dispersal)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name the firm of chartered surveyors used to provide advice on the location and dispersal of Ministry of Defence establishments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Messrs. Healey and Baker were retained under contract to survey the defence estate and identify sites which might realise substantial receipts if sale were possible.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether consultations with the Civil Service trade unions took place before the decision was taken to use the firm of chartered surveyors to advise on location and dispersal of Ministry of Defence establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Healey and Baker's survey was strictly an identification of those parts of the defence estate which might be attractive commercially. After their report was received, a working group was set up to study the feasibility of implementing their recommendations. The Civil Service trades unions were brought in at that stage.

Trident

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether tests to validate the British Trident warhead will be carried out at the United States test site in Nevada; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler) on 24 May 1985 at column *600*.

Iran (Spare Parts)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence when Her Majesty's Government were informed of the agreement between representatives of International Military Services and representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran, dated 16 October 1984, relating to the delivery of spare parts to Iran.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Officials were kept in touch throughout the discussions between International Military Services and Iranian representatives relating to the delivery of spare parts to Iran. The spares concerned were due for supply under an existing contract, having been fully paid for prior to the Iranian revolution. Their delivery was entirely consistent with the guidelines set out by my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in his reply to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 29 October 1985 at column *454*.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there have been any consignments of spare parts for military equipment delivered in the last 12 months to the Islamic Republic of Iran in pursuance of an agreement between it and International Military Services.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Yes. Various spare parts for military vehicles and for support ships have been delivered to Iran in the last 12 months under an agreement with International Military Services. In both cases, the spares concerned were due for supply under existing contracts, signed and paid for prior to the Iranian revolution. The supply of these spares was fully consistent with the guidelines set out by my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in his reply to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 29 October 1985 at column *454*.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there have been any consignments of spare parts for vehicles and other military equipment delivered by International Military Services to the Islamic Republic of Iran in the calendar years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No, other than *(a)* the first deliveries into Iranian custody of the spares referred to in my reply to the hon. Member's question relating to the last 12 months; *(b)* a small quantity of vehicle and training equipment spares delivered in 1982.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates of the proposed visits to Her Majesty's royal dockyards at Rosyth and Plymouth, Devonport, of the contractors who have expressed an interest in tendering for commercial management.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There has already been a number of visits by companies to each of the dockyards. Further visits are expected but precise dates have yet to be agreed between the companies concerned and the dockyards.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing for 1987-88 and subsequent years for which figures are available, his latest estimate of the savings from dockyard commercial management.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Estimates of savings remain in line with those given by my right hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 23 July 1985 at column *497*.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will indicate his working assumption for the range of profit margins assumed in the award of contracts for the refitting of naval vessels under his proposed scheme of commercial management.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The rate of profit for work which the royal dockyards will be competing in open competition with other yards in the private sector will, of course, not be known. So far as non-competitive work is concerned, the pricing will be on a risk basis under Government profit formula arrangements, employing the appropriate rate of profit as recommended at the time by the Review Board for Government contracts.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his latest estimate of the cost of consultancy fees in the preparation of studies on commercial management for the royal dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The latest estimate of the cost of consultancies so far engaged to undertake studies on commercial management for the royal dockyards is £2·2 million.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will agree to make available the tender documents to be issued when applications for the award of the franchises for managing the royal dockyards are invited.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not the normal practice to publish tender documents, and those in respect of the royal dockyards will contain classified information. However, it is our intention to publish as much information as is consistent with national security.

Rosyth Dockyard

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place a copy of the Touche-Ross report on the Rosyth dockyard, part 2, in the Library.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. As I told the hon. Gentleman on 25 October, at column *276*, phase II of the Touche-Ross report, which has just been completed, is classified. Copies are, however, being made available to the Select Committee on Defence.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 November 1985

WALES

Toxic Refuse (Dumping)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales which locations in Wales are licensed for the dumping of toxic refuse.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 responsibility for licensing waste disposal sites in Wales rests with district councils as waste disposal authorities. District councils are required to maintain a register for inspection by the public of all sites in their areas licenced to receive controlled waste which includes special or toxic waste. Up to date records are not held centrally, but some information about waste disposal sites licensed to receive controlled waste is included in the hazardous waste inspectorate's 1984 register of facilities for the disposal of controlled wastes in England and Wales, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House Library.

Access to manual files on individuals is strictly limited to those who need to see them in the course of their duties.

Trawsfynydd and Wylfa Power Stations

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had in the current year with the Central Electricity Generating Board concerning the future of the Trawsfynydd and Wylfa nuclear power stations and the possible implications on employment in Gwynedd.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Following discussions with the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board last year, I am keeping in close touch with the studies into potential sites at Trawsfynydd and Wylfa which the board announced in March.

Welsh Language (Newspapers)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has now received any approaches for assistance from his Department towards helping to maintain the present level of Welsh language weekly newspapers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have received several letters about the particular problems facing two Welsh language weekly newspapers, and have informed the correspondents that I cannot hold out any prospect of financial assistance from this Department.

Sheep Farmers

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to safeguard the interest of sheep farmers in Wales during the next year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Support arrangements for the sheepmeat sector in the next year will be considered as part of the 1986 common agricultural policy price-fixing negotiations. The sheepmeat regime has brought substantial benefits to Wales and in the last marketing year 1984-85 payments of £39·8 million were made to Welsh sheep producers. In addition in 1984 payments to producers in Wales for sheep under the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme totalled £17·9 million.

Farm Workers (Statistics)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many farm workers have left the agriculture industry in Wales during the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: During the period 1982-85, the number of full and part-time hired workers on holdings in Wales fell by 736. the number of family workers, however is provisionally estimated to have risen by 142 and that of farmers, partners, directors and managers by 1,875. The total labour force (excluding farmers wives but including casual and seasonal workers) is provisionally estimated to have risen by 2,026 in this period.

Scab

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of scab have been notified in Wales during the last 12 months; what were the corresponding figures for the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The table gives the number of outbreaks of sheep scab in Wales in each of the past 10 years, each year beginning on 1 July.

Year	*Outbreaks*
1976-77	3
1977-78	0
1978-79	0
1979-80	0
1980-81	11
1981-82	1
1982-83	12
1983-84	11
1984-85	16
1985-86	*10

*to 15 November.

Agriculture and Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the principals of Wales' agriculture college, Aberystwyth, to discuss the implications of the proposed changes in the advisory services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have not recently met the principal of the Welsh agricultural college. The Agriculture and Development and Advisory Service is, however, in close liaison with the college over the preparation of advisory packages which the college propose offering to farmers in Wales.

Severe Weather Conditions (Production Loss)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the estimated loss of agricultural production in Wales due to the bad weather conditions during the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Figures are not yet available on which to make an accurate assessment of the effect of the poor weather experienced during the summer months. It is clear however that both output and costs will have been adversely affected.

SCOTLAND

Solvent Abuse

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* on a local government area basis, and by sex *(a)* the numbers of young people detected abusing solvents since the Solvent Abuse (Scotland) Act 1983 came into effect and *(b)* the numbers of those detected that were referred to children's panels.

Mr. John MacKay: The numbers of cases of solvent abuse brought to the attention of the police have been as follows:

	Number
1983 (July-December)	1,933
1984	1,192

The numbers of referrals to reporters and children's hearings are as follows. Figures for 1985 will not be available until mid-1986.

	1983 (July-December)				*1984*				*Total*			
	To Reporter		*To Hearing*		*To Reporter*		*To Hearing*		*To Reporter*		*To Hearing*	
Region	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*	*M*	*F*
Borders	4	—	1	—	4	—	3	—	8	—	4	—
Central	4	1	3	—	19	11	15	4	23	12	18	4
Dumfries & Galloway	—	—	—	—	4	2	2	2	4	2	2	2
Fife	6	2	3	2	19	5	7	2	25	7	10	4
Grampian	15	5	2	2	21	5	7	1	36	10	9	3
Highland	8	4	6	—	16	5	6	1	24	9	12	1
Lothian	24	4	2	—	46	23	7	3	70	27	9	3
Strathclyde	12	5	2	5	359	99	237	61	371	104	239	66
Tayside	9	—	3	—	33	4	12	—	42	4	15	—
Totals	82	21	22	9	521	154	296	74	603	175	318	83

Sunday Trading

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Scotland for how long Sunday trading has operated in Scotland; and what assessment he makes of the current social impact.

Mr. John MacKay: There has been no general statutory prohibition on Sunday trading in Scotland in any post-Union legislation. Such patterns of Sunday trading as have developed have done so in response to local demand and local opinion. My right hon. Friend accepts the assessment of the social impact of Sunday trading in Scotland made by the National Consumer Council and by the Auld committee of inquiry into proposals to amend the Shops Act, set out in paragraphs 238 and 243 of the Auld report (Cmnd. 9376).

Multiple Occupation Houses

Mr. Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to enable local authorities in Scotland to license houses in multiple occupation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Powers are already available to local authorities, under the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966, to introduce a registration scheme for houses in multiple occupation. In addition, they have powers of control under the Housing (Management of Houses and Buildings in Multiple Occupation) (Scotland) Regulations 1964 and the power to make byelaws under the Public Health (Scotland) Act 1897.

Sexual Assaults

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when revised guidance will be issued to the police on the investigation of complaints of sexual assault; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: Revised guidance on the investigation of complaints of sexual assault was issued to the police service on 14 November 1985 in the light of the recent Scottish Office social research study, "Investigating Sexual Assault", and of consultations with the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland), the Rape Crisis Centres, and Scottish Women's Aid.

The new guidance emphasises the need for victims to be treated tactfully and sympathetically and covers a number of important areas including medical examinations, questioning about previous sexual history, and follow-up action.

I am arranging for a copy of the guidance to be placed in the Library of the House.

ENERGY

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Peter Walker: All information about individuals held by my Department is protected by the "need to know" principle. The guidelines issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", are observed. There are copies of these guidelines in the House Library. Privacy markings restrict access to written information about individuals, manual files are registered and their movements are logged.

Miners' Pensions

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Energy what estimate he has made of the numbers of mineworkers who have not paid their national insurance contributions for 12 months and may have their redundant mineworkers' pension affected; whether he has now considered what legislative changes are necessary to safeguard their benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of mineworkers to be made redundant next year will depend on the National Coal Board's plans for the continued reorganisation of the industry. My right hon. Friend and I are considering carefully what might need to be done in relation to those whose benefits under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme would be affected by failure to pay national insurance contributions during the strike.

Sizewell Inquiry

Dr. Twinn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the date when the report of the Sizewell inquiry will be submitted to him.

Mr. Peter Walker: The timing of the report is a matter for the inspector. However, the inspector has informed me that, following a recent review of progress, he does not now expect to be able to deliver his main recommendations until the spring of 1986.

PRIME MINISTER

Middle East

Q33. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister when she intends to hold further discussions with King Hussein and Mr. Shimon Peres regarding the peace process in the middle east.

The Prime Minister: I keep in regular contact with King Hussein, but have no plans for an early meeting. I look forward to welcoming Mr. Peres to London early next year.

Regional Economic Policy (Wales)

Q59. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister if she will now give further consideration to the effectiveness of regional economic policy as it is working in Wales.

The Prime Minister: The current arrangements are being kept under regular review following the measures announced last November which resulted from a thorough and wide ranging examination of regional economic policy and its impact throughout the country.

Fraserburgh

Q95. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Fraserburgh.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will list her engagements for Tuesday 19 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall be giving a reception for Fellows of the Royal Society.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Health Service

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the current level of funding of the National Health Service.

Mr. Lawson: I have received a number of representations on the current level of funding of the NHS.

PAYE (Computerisation)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied with the progress being made in the computerisation of the pay-as-you-earn (COP) project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Yes. The COP project is proceeding as planned, both as regards cost and as regards timing.

As at the end of October, 6,000 visual display units had been installed in 122 tax offices. Thirty-eight of the offices had completed the transfer of their paper records to the computer. The remainder were in course of making the transfer. Further tax offices are being connected to the COP system at around 20 each month. Taxpayer records are being transferred to the computer at a rate of over 1 million each month.

TSB (Scotland) Sale (Judgment)

Mr. Craigen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the consequences of the ruling by a Scottish judge yesterday that the assets of TSB (Scotland) belong to the depositors and what course of action the Treasury intends to take on the matter.

Mr. Ian Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. *564*]: This morning the Treasury lodged formal notice of appeal to the Inner House.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Ridley: In the case of computer files containing information on individuals, specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House library.

Manual files on individual members of staff are open only to the personnel officers responsible for those staff and to other officers with a "specific need to know".

Trunk Road Improvements

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the trunk road improvements completed and started in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire during the years 1979 to 1985, inclusive, indicating the cost of each.

Mrs. Chalker: Trunk road improvements including motorway construction costing £1 million or more and either completed or started between 1979 and 1985 are as follows:

Route	*County*	*Start Year*	*Completion Year*	*Costs £m*
M11 Cambridge Western bypass	Cambs	1977	1980	21·3
M11 Quendon-Stump Cross	Essex	1977	1979	13·7
M11 A120-Quendon	Essex	1977	1979	11·1
M25 A13-A12	Essex	1979	1981	19·4
M25 A10-M11	Herts/Essex	1980	1984	55·9
M25 A13-A12	GLC/Essex	1980	1983	71·3
M25 M11-A12	Essex	1980	1983	60·9
A10 Southery-South Runcton	Norfolk	1977	1980	5·3
A10 Ely-Littleport bypass	Cambs	1984	Not Yet Open	7·0
A11 Attleborough bypass	Norfolk	1983	1985	5·5
A11 Barton Mills bypass	Suffolk	1985	Not Yet Open	3·1
A12 Copdock-Washbrook bypass	Suffolk	1982	1984	11·9
A12/45 Ipswich Southern bypass (including Orwell bridge)	Suffolk	1979	1982	57·4
A12 Ipswich Eastern bypass	Suffolk	1982	1984	3·5
A12 Great Yarmouth Western bypass (northern section including Breydon bridge)	Norfolk	1983	Not Yet Open	17·4
A12 Chelmsford bypass	Essex	1984	Not Yet Open	32·2
A12 4 Sisters junction improvement	Suffolk	1982	1984	1·1
A13 Mar Dyke-East of Grays	Essex	1979	1981	27·3
A17 West of Kings Lynn county boundary	Norfolk	1981	1982	6·2
A45 Cambridge Northern bypass	Cambs	1976	1979	23·3
A45 Levington heath improvement	Suffolk	1982	1982	2·3
A45 Ipswich Western bypass	Suffolk	1984	1985	18·2
A45 St. Neots bypass	Beds/Cambs	1984	Not Yet Open	2·1
A45 Trimley Grade Separation	Suffolk	1985	Not Yet Open	2·1
A45 Rougham-Woolpit improvement	Suffolk	1977	1979	5·9
A47 Blofield bypass	Norfolk	1981	1983	4·0
A47 Wisbech-West Walton bypass	Cambs	1982	1984	5·0
A47 Swaffham bypass	Norfolk	1979	1981	4·9
A120 Colchester Eastern bypass	Essex	1980	1982	24·0
A604 Bar Hill-Godmanchester	Cambs	1979	1981	13·2
*A120 Dovercourt bypass (trunked mid-1983)	Essex		1979	2·3
*A282 Dartford Tunnel approach road	Essex	1981	1982	2·3

* Local authority schemes receiving 100 per cent. grant.

Concessionary Fares

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to issue guidelines to local authorities about concessionary fare subsidy payments arising from the Transport Act.

Mr. David Mitchell: Regulations on the reimbursement of operators will be laid early in 1986, and we shall at that stage be issuing a circular and further explanatory notes on all aspects of concessionary fares schemes.

A127

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of *(a)* fatal and *(b)* non-fatal accidents on the A127 in 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: Only data for the January to June period are available for 1985. There was one fatal accident and 107 serious or slight injury accidents.

London Airports (Traffic Distribution)

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the Government requested the Civil Aviation Authority to review the present rules for traffic distribution between the London airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 11.9 and 11.10 of the White Paper "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542) published in June. These explain why the Government consider that the roles played by each of London's airports (Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Luton) should be examined in detail in consultation with the civil aviation industry and its users. The White Paper announced the Government's intention to invite the Civil Aviation Authority to review the existing traffic distribution rules for London and to advise him on the need for any changes. The authority has just published a consultation document, "Air traffic distribution in the London area", a copy of which is in the Library.

Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the report of the review of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950.

Mrs. Chalker: The report of Professor Michael Horne's review of the Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950 is being published this afternoon. Copies are being placed in the Library. I should like to thank Professor Horne and his two colleagues, Mr. Norman Ellis and Mr. Derek Ford, for the very considerable effort they have clearly put into preparing this report, which applies to England, Wales and Scotland. They have made a thorough and fundamental examination of the problems associated with utility roadworks and have made wide-ranging recommendations. I am now inviting comments on the report, which is available from HMSO, to be submitted not later than 28 February 1986.

East London Road Assessment Study

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the report of the East London road assessment study.

Mrs. Chalker: Lack of co-operation from the GLC is delaying the first stage report on identification of problems, which will not now be published until 1986.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people, in each borough, have put views forward to the consultants undertaking the East London road assessment study; and how many invitations were issued.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that the consultants distributed nearly 200,000 leaflets inviting views, placed nine general advertisements in the local and London-wide press, and sent at least 535 letters to local groups. In addition invitations to contribute were sent to all London Boroughs, the city of London, and the GLC and various national bodies and organisations.

I expect information on the responses received by the consultants to be contained in the report of the first stage of the study which will be published in 1986.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many submissions have been received from London borough councils on the subject of the East London road assessment study.

Mrs. Chalker: Regrettably, the four London boroughs covered by the study area decided not to co-operate with the consultants or take part in the studies. I understand that so far the consultants have received submissions from three other London boroughs.

M25

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the monthly peak hour and night time traffic flows on the M25 between South Mimms and the Dartford tunnel for each month since February.

Mrs. Chalker: The only location on the M25 between South Mimms and the Dartford tunnel where figures are available from continuous monitoring for the whole period is at Ockendon. The figures are contained in the table.

M25 Ockendon Traffic Flow Data

1985 Month	†8 to 9 am Weekday Highest (vph)	†8 to 9 am Weekday Lowest (vph)	†5 to 6 pm Weekday Highest (vph)	†5 to 6 pm Weekday Lowest (vph)	10 pm to 6 am 8-hour Monthly Average
February	5,109	4,216	5,170	3,597	2,896
March	5,167	4,436	5,624	4,202	3,119
April	5,319	4,576	5,545	4,227	4,452
May	5,105	4,669	5,703	4,347	4,009
June	5,148	4,673	5,578	4,149	4,143
July	5,364	4,230	6,132	4,296	4,592
August	5,091	4,518	5,519	4,139	4,746
September	5,279	4,364	5,879	4,288	4,135
October*	5,358	4,847	5,910	4,390	3,896

* First half only.
† Excluding Bank Holidays.

A1, Holloway Road

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the peak and night time traffic flow figures for the A1, Holloway road, since the opening of the north-east section of the M25.

Mrs. Chalker: I have no current figures for traffic flows on this stretch of road, which is currently the responsibility of the GLC, but I have asked for this information to be contained in the report on the first stage of the East London assessment study next year.

Metropolitan Roads Trunking Order 1985

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport when his Department expects to have fully considered the views of London boroughs on the Metropolitan Roads Trunking Order 1985.

Mrs. Chalker: I am not able at this stage to say how long it will take to give full and proper consideration to the views of the London boroughs.

British Airways

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any report from the Civil Aviation Authority about the circumstances surrounding the collapse of the starboard undercarriage of a British Airways aircraft at Copenhagen on 12 November 1985.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 November 1985]: At the Danish authorities' request, the investigation will be conducted by my Department's chief inspector of accidents. The chief inspector will produce a report in due course. Any safety recommendations arising from the investigation will be passed as they arise to the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the statutory responsibility for ensuring the safety of British registered aircraft.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had any recent consultations with the CAA about the servicing and maintenance procedures of British Airways aircraft, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Spicer [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 November 1985]: The Civil Aviation Authority, which has the statutory responsibility for ensuring the safety of aircraft, inform me that it is satisfied with British Airways' methods and procedures for servicing and maintenance of aircraft.

Australasia (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the purpose of the recent visit by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) to Australasia; what progress was made towards greater liberalisation of the London to Autstralia route via Singapore; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer [*pursuant to the reply*, 14 November 1985, c. *268*]: The purpose of my visit to Australasia was to explore the scope for greater liberalisation of air services, especially on fares. I made various proposals to this effect to the Australian Government. Agreement has since been reached on the introduction of additional capacity of both BA and Qantas; the remaining proposals are also being pursued at official level.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Travel (Cost)

Mr. Dubs asked the Lord Privy Seal what has been the cost of parliamentary travel within the United Kingdom, excluding journeys between Westminster, the constituency and hon. Members' homes, for each year since the scheme began; and what is the estimated cost of administering these arrangements.

Mr. Biffen: The cost of travel on parliamentary business by hon. Members within the United Kingdom under the extended travel arrangements authorised by resolution of the House on 4 March 1980 for each year since the scheme began is as follows:

	£
1980-81	5,775
1981-82	14,079
1982-83	27,202
1983-84	21,650
1984-85	49,375
*1985-86	39,935

* To 31 October 1985.

These figures do not include the cost of journeys undertaken by Select Committees collectively or by hon. Members between Westminster, their constituencies, their registered homes and within their constituency.

The increase in costs from 1983-84 to 1984-85 is due to the fact that hon. Members have been making greater use of the extended travel arrangements and partly also to the enhanced motor mileage allowance.

The administration of these arrangements is subsumed within the duties of the staff responsible for all travelling facilities available to hon. Members, their spouses and supporting staff, and as such is not separately costed.

Staff

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will detail the results of his monitoring of the ethnic composition of staff employed at the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Beith: There has not so far been a survey of the ethnic composition of staff employed by the House of Commons Commission. However, in July this year the commission agreed that the Board of Management should enter into consultation with the trade union side of the House of Commons Whitley Committee with a view to introducing a system of ethnic monitoring in the House Departments covering existing staff, new entrants and future applicants for employment in non-industrial grades. The question of including industrial staff will be considered when details are received of the arrangements for such staff in the Civil Service.

The commission also agreed that the consultations should proceed on the basis of the questionnaire used for the purpose of ethnic monitoring in the Civil Service. I understand that the head of the Administration Department

has subsequently written to the secretary of the trade union side inviting discussions between management and unions on this matter.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General how many black and white trainees there were on each youth training scheme in the Birmingham and Solihull area at the latest available date.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission is urgently considering the extent to which information provided by managing agents and sponsors on the ethnic background of trainees on the youth training scheme can be made available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will provide the best available information on the academic qualifications of *(a)* black and *(b)* white trainees on entry to the youth training schemes.

Mr. Trippier: Reliable, comprehensive information is not available. I shall, however, write to the hon. Member with the details of some information we have.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General if he has any information that would lead him to revise his estimate of nine deaths on the youth training scheme from 1 April 1983 to 30 June 1985, as given to the hon. Member for Bolsover on 23rd October, *Official Report*, columns *168-170;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No. The nine fatalities referred to in my reply of 23 October included a fatality which occured in Scotland on 26 February this year and which was the subject of a fatal accident inquiry held on 14 November. If the inquiry finds that the death did not arise out of or in connection with a training or work activity, the fatality will not be included in the Manpower Services Commission's future accident figures for the youth training scheme. I will write to the hon. Member when I know the outcome of the inquiry.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of cases in which the families of youth training scheme trainees who died on youth training schemes were sent cheques for £78 by the Manpower Services Commission in lieu of industrial death benefit payments from the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Trippier: Since the youth training scheme was introduced on 1 April 1983, the parents of six young people have been paid the equivalent of industrial death benefit by the Manpower Services Commission. In five cases the maximum payment of £78 was made and in one case a payment of £52 (the maximum for a single parent) was made.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General if he will provide the date of death of each youth training scheme trainee since 1 April 1983 and the cause of death in each case.

Mr. Trippier: The following is a list of fatalities on the youth training scheme since 1 April 1983:

Date of Fatality	*Cause of Fatality*
27 June 1983	Road traffic accident
7 September 1983	Accident on residential outdoor activity
12 October 1983	Forklift truck accident
1 February 1984	Tractor accident
27 July 1984	Road traffic accident
22 August 1984	Road traffic accident
24 September 1984	Dumper truck overturned
12 February 1985	Severe burns
26 February 1985	The outcome of a fatal accident inquiry into this death is awaited to establish the exact cause
29 July 1985	Electrocution
20 August 1985	Road traffic accident

Mr. Corbett asked the Paymaster-General (1) what is, by each Manpower Services Commission area, the size of the budget and the allocation of premium places for youth training scheme mode B for the year from April 1986; and how this compares with the provision for each year since the scheme was introduced;

(2) what is the total Manpower Services Commission budget for 1986-87 for the provision of mode B youth training scheme places; how many places this is expected to provide; and what were the figures for each of the last two financial years.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to break down expenditure by area, but the tables show the allocation by area of approved places in mode B1 community projects and training workshops for 1984-85 and 1985-86. Under the two-year youth training scheme from April 1986 the distinction between modes will disappear, but existing mode B1 providers will generally be eligible for the premium rate of funding. The national planning total of approved first-year premium places for 1986-87 is 51,000 (excluding information technology centres). In addition there will be approved second year places, but their number, and the allocations to areas, have yet to be determined. Planned spending on premium places in 1986-87 is also therefore undecided, but in 1983-84, 84,637 places were approved in community projects and training workshops, and expenditure was some £105 million; in 1984-85, 65,195 approved places were planned, and some £217 million spent.

1984-85

Area	*Total Number of Planned Approved Places*		
	Community Projects	*Training Workshops*	*Total*
Glasgow	988	345	1,333
Lanarkshire	578	474	1,052
Renfrew, Dunfermline and Argyll	850	690	1,540
Ayrshire, Dumbarton and Galloway	607	443	1,050
Lothian and Borders	575	270	845
Central and Fife	270	380	650
Grampian and Tayside	364	152	516
Highlands and Islands	194	98	292
Durham	535	940	1,475
Cleveland	894	696	1,590
Newcastle	1,080	390	1,470
South Tyne	1,370	465	1,835

Area	Total Number of Planned Approved Places		
	Community Projects	Training Workshops	Total
Humberside	745	500	1,245
Leeds	1,060	320	1,380
Bradford	655	495	1,150
Wakefield	930	395	1,325
Sheffield	1,030	310	1,340
Cheshire	1,428	442	1,870
Cumbria	195	95	290
Lancashire	1,075	100	1,175
Manchester Central	1,160	490	1,650
Manchester East	280	210	490
Manchester North	730	330	1,060
Merseyside Inner	1,730	495	2,225
Merseyside Outer	1,307	903	2,210
Birmingham	1,945	335	2,280
Coventry	1,055	663	1,718
Derby	770	230	1,000
Dudley	760	385	1,145
Leicester	1,113	700	1,813
Lincoln	363	202	565
Nottingham	914	598	1,512
Staffordshire	1,132	300	1,432
Telford	842	158	1,000
Wolverhampton	1,600	330	1,930
Gwent	600	105	705
Swansea	830	220	1,050
Cardiff	1,290	605	1,895
Wrexham	635	345	980
Avon	1,000	80	1,080
Gloucester	899	111	1,010
Plymouth	853	202	1,055
Taunton	600	170	770
Chatham	1,075	250	1,325
Chelmsford	550	750	1,300
Fareham	807	285	1,092
High Wycombe	650	40	690
Horsham	880	90	970
Ipswich	938	192	1,130
Luton	470	170	640
Reading	415	115	530
London North East	660	440	1,100
London North	440	250	690
London South East	640	380	1,020
London South West	260	450	710
Total	45,616	19,579	65,195

1985-86

Area	Total Number of Planned Approved Places		
	Community Projects	Training Workshops	Total
Glasgow	582	465	1,047
Lanarkshire	580	440	1,020
Renfrew, Dunfermline and Argyll	645	620	1,265
Ayrshire, Dumbarton and Galloway	443	472	915
Lothian and Borders	590	275	865
Central and Fife	320	380	700
Grampian and Tayside	335	185	520
Highlands and Islands	194	99	293
Durham	470	900	1,370
Cleveland	777	673	1,450
Newcastle	856	379	1,235
South Tyne	1,185	450	1,635
Humberside	690	530	1,220
Leeds	995	320	1,315
Bradford	630	470	1,100
Wakefield	865	450	1,315
Sheffield	1,005	330	1,335
Cheshire	1,338	482	1,820
Cumbria	170	130	300
Lancashire	1,086	115	1,201
Manchester Central	1,061	539	1,600
Manchester East	310	210	520
Manchester North	730	320	1,050
Merseyside Inner	1,765	444	2,209
Merseyside Outer	1,152	928	2,080
Birmingham	1,870	395	2,265
Coventry	916	554	1,470
Derby	575	320	895
Dudley	645	335	980
Leicester	900	570	1,470
Lincoln	595	—	595
Nottingham	914	558	1,472
Staffordshire	1,310	190	1,500
Telford	827	173	1,000
Wolverhampton	1,103	330	1,433
Gwent	600	105	705
Swansea	800	220	1,020
Cardiff	1,165	725	1,890
Wrexham	630	305	935
Avon	900	65	965
Gloucester	829	111	940
Plymouth	695	205	900
Taunton	610	165	775
Chatham	915	230	1,145
Chelmsford	370	700	1,070
Fareham	722	339	1,061
High Wycombe	525	80	605
Horsham	579	165	744
Ipswich	922	224	1,146
Luton	466	138	604
Reading	415	120	535
London North East	414	302	716
London North	616	400	1,016
London South East	610	550	1,160
London South West	285	425	710
Total	41,497	19,605	61,102

Mr. Wilson asked the paymaster-General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown of the regional variations which exist of the percentage of youth training scheme places assessed for performance.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985, c. *38*]: The percentage of approved 1984-85 places covered by programmes assessed in each region by the end of July 1985 was as follows:

Region	Places assessed per cent.
Scotland	97
Northern	99
North West	97
Yorks and Humberside	97
Midlands	97
Wales	99
South West	92
South East	96
London	95
Great Britain	96

One hundred per cent. coverage is not required because some approved places remain unfilled.

British Conference and Exhibition Centres

Mr. Grist asked the Paymaster General if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the British Conference and Exhibition Centres export council to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Trippier: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall. My right hon. and noble Friend will be opening the exhibition at 6.30 pm on Monday 25 November.

Information Technology

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Paymaster General what Manpower Services Commission funds have been hitherto specifically earmarked for training in information technology; whether there are any plans to increase the sums made available for such training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have asked the Manpower Services Commission to give priority to training in the new technologies including information technology. The commission has specifically allocated some £37 million in 1985-86 for training in information technology. This includes training through information technology centres, the threshold computer scheme, priority skills training and access to information technology. In addition the youth training scheme includes an introduction to information technology in all its programmes and priority is given in adult training schemes to the new technologies.

Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Paymaster General how he intends to disburse the extra £2·5 million support for enterprise agencies announced on 12 November.

Mr. Trippier: The detailed arrangements for the new financial support to be available to local enterprise agencies in 1986-87 will be announced shortly.

Labour Statistics

Dr. Cunningham asked the Paymaster General if he will give a detailed breakdown of the number of unemployed claimants in the Copeland parliamentary constituency using the most recent available figures, analysed by sex and by the age of the unemployed and duration of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the Copeland parliamentary constituency as at 10 October 1985, analysed by sex, age and duration of unemployment.

Age and Duration Analysis of the Unemployed for Statistical Date 10 October 1985
Parliamentary Constituencies AD

Northern
Copeland CC

Males

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	1	3	6	4	13	10	10	13	7	3	4	0	3	77
Over 1 and up to 2	5	11	2	7	20	7	7	3	4	3	2	2	3	76
Over 2 and up to 4	3	10	9	7	32	9	11	13	3	8	4	3	3	115
Over 4 and up to 6	38	17	9	9	20	15	7	4	6	4	7	4	0	140
Over 6 and up to 8	18	5	5	7	22	10	7	6	7	3	4	3	1	98
Over 8 and up to 13	4	14	13	12	53	31	13	17	19	12	18	16	14	236
Over 13 and up to 26	12	26	24	25	114	46	29	14	22	21	14	13	12	372
Over 26 and up to 39	0	6	15	19	51	20	23	11	20	8	15	20	7	215
Over 39 and up to 52	0	6	9	11	47	38	20	21	9	9	10	17	8	205
Over 52 and up to 65	0	13	10	10	36	32	25	30	22	28	70	41	3	320
Over 65 and up to 78	0	0	8	4	27	18	8	8	5	5	5	24	0	112
Over 78 and up to 104	0	0	6	6	25	24	16	13	9	12	8	25	0	144
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	4	15	44	33	24	21	15	17	18	45	1	237
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	2	40	35	29	17	19	13	12	26	0	193
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	18	20	11	12	7	11	10	18	1	108
Over 260	0	0	0	0	20	28	22	24	18	14	21	34	0	181
Grand totals Males	81	111	120	138	582	376	262	227	192	171	222	291	56	2,825

Females

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	*Under 17*	*17*	*18*	*19*	*20-24*	*25-29*	*30-34*	*35-39*	*40-44*	*45-49*	*50-54*	*55-59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
One or less	2	0	3	1	14	9	2	2	2	3	0	0	0	38
Over 1 and up to 2	5	4	4	3	16	6	5	2	2	3	1	1	0	52
Over 2 and up to 4	5	17	6	4	25	8	3	3	1	2	2	3	0	79
Over 4 and up to 6	9	14	21	6	20	15	8	6	3	4	5	6	0	117
Over 6 and up to 8	6	7	12	5	16	12	2	1	2	2	2	1	0	68
Over 8 and up to 13	2	6	9	12	37	24	11	5	11	2	6	5	0	130
Over 13 and up to 26	2	17	8	10	80	46	21	6	11	9	10	6	0	226
Over 26 and up to 39	1	7	10	5	43	45	18	11	4	7	10	7	1	169
Over 39 and up to 52	0	3	5	7	35	34	19	4	10	2	10	7	0	136
Over 52 and up to 65	0	3	14	9	28	18	6	4	8	2	3	9	0	104
Over 65 and up to 78	0	2	5	4	13	8	7	0	0	5	2	5	0	51
Over 78 and up to 104	0	0	1	4	15	16	2	5	4	5	5	10	0	67
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	1	4	19	10	3	4	7	3	5	12	0	68
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	2	19	4	6	1	1	4	6	5	0	48
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	8	4	1	1	3	3	6	10	0	36

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	Under 17	17	18	19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60 and over	Total
Over 260	0	0	0	0	4	10	4	0	1	6	7	9	0	41
Grand totals Females	32	80	99	76	392	269	118	55	70	62	80	96	1	1,430

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed in Great Grimsby; what was the equivalent figure in May 1979; and what is the percentage increase.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the Great Grimsby parliamentary constituency was 6,697. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General how many school leavers are registered as job-seekers in Great Grimsby at present; and how many school leavers were registered as job-seekers for the same months in 1979 and 1982.

Mr. Alan Clark: On 10 October 1985 the number of school leavers registered as job-seekers at Grimsby careers office was 525. The corresponding figure for October 1982 was also 525. Figures for 1979 have not been retained.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently estimated to be self-employed in Great Grimsby.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of the number of self-employed persons in local areas are available only from the censuses of population. The 1981 census identified 2,495 self-employed persons resident in Great Grimsby.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General how many people have found places on Manpower Services Commission training courses in Great Grimsby in each year since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is not available for the constituency of Great Grimsby. However, the following table shows the number of entrants to adult and youth training schemes run by the Manpower Services Commission in the Grimsby local authority district, from 1979 to date.

Numbers of entrants to adult and youth training schemes in the Grimsby Local Authority District by financial year

Financial year	Adult entrants	Youth entrants
	Training Opportunities Scheme	
1979-80	380	—
1980-81	331	—
1981-82	287	—
1982-83	322	—
		Youth Training Scheme
1983-84	366	1,386
1984-85	250	1,515
	*Adult Training Programmes**	
1985-86	†‡200	‡1,532

* Made up of job training scheme, training for enterprise, and wider opportunities training programme.

† Figures for the local grant to employers and access to information technology schemes are not available for the Grimsby local authority district. Grimsby will however benefit from the 1,350 people it is planned to train through these schemes on Humberside in 1985-86.

‡ These figures relate to the planned number of entrants.

Community Programme

Mr. Lawler asked the Paymaster General how many industrial or commercial sponsors there are of community programme schemes in Bradford.

Mr. Alan Clark: None, at present. However, we are seeking to encourage industrial and commercial employers in all areas to become more involved with the community programme. In Bradford, some employers have already provided financial assistance for specific projects, which has been of much benefit.

Mines and Quarries Act 1954

Mr. Skeet asked the Paymaster General whether he proposes to seek to amend the Mines and Quarries Act 1954.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes. The Health and Safety Commission is reviewing the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and associated legislation. It is intended to replace them with a series of new regulations and supporting codes of practice. The commission has so far issued consultative documents on three subjects. It will be putting forward proposals in due course.

Mogul Foods Ltd., Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General if he will institute an investigation into the case of a loan, given under the small firms loan guarantee scheme, to Mogul Foods Limited, Portsmouth, on 5 August 1982; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No. The lender in this case made a claim on the Government guarantee, which was paid in April 1983. My Department has no reason to doubt that the guarantee and the subsequent claim were valid under the terms of the scheme.

Work Permits

Mr. Baldry asked the Paymaster General whether a decision has yet been made to continue after 1985 the special annual quota of work permits for workers from the dependent territories whose level of skill is below that required by the general work permit scheme.

Mr. Alan Clark: Yes. It has been decided that the quota for 1986 will be 200—the same as this year. Within the figure of 200 no more than 150 permits will be allowed for any one territory.

Businesses (Statistics)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list, for each standard region, the latest available figures for the number of new business starts and business stops since 1979.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985, c. *40*]: The latest available figures were published in *British Business* on 2 November 1984. A copy has been placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Terrorism

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of persons wanted in connection with terrorist offences committed since and including 1969 who have been extradited from the Irish Republic to Northern Ireland and vice versa.

Mr. Scott: Since the first warrants involving terrorist-type offences were forwarded in 1971, three persons have been extradited from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland and 31 persons have been extradited from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland.

Housing Executive Estate Roads

Mr. Clifford Forsythe asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of Housing Executive estate roads completed prior to 1 November 1984 in accordance with Department of Environment standards which have not yet been adopted.

Mr. Needham: Three.

Equal Pay

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the increase in the number of complaints under equal pay legislation in Northern Ireland following the recent implementation of the amendment regulations in 1984; and what extra financial provision has been made to enable the Commission to fulfil its extra statutory obligations.

Dr. Boyson: Before the introduction of the Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1984 the number of inquiries/complaints to the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland under the equal pay legislation averaged 26 a year. It increased in 1984-85 by 16 to 42. During the seven-month period to 31 October 1985 there were 48 inquiries/complaints.

In 1984-85 the commission received £250,000, an increase of 9·6 per cent. over its 1983-84 provision of £228,000. The provision for 1985-86 is £272,500, a 19·5 per cent. increase over 1983-84. The detailed allocation of the commission's budget (including any annual increase) across its various activities, is primarily a matter for the commission.

Voluntary Schools (Vested Land)

Mr. McCusker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much land has been vested on behalf of voluntary schools under article 10 of the Northern Ireland Education Order 1978; and whether any such scheme is presently under consideration.

Mr. Scott: No land has been vested and no proposals are at present under consideration.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. William Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what (i) questions and (ii) other points about administration in the Province have been raised with him by the Government of the Republic of Ireland in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1985; on which of them he has taken action as a result of the representations received, stating the grounds in each case; and why he took no action on each of those on which action was not taken.

Mr. King [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985]: Exchanges between Governments are generally conducted on a confidential basis and it is not, therefore, our normal practice to report on such contacts to the House.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Open University

15. **Mr. Alex Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students are now registered with the Open university as part of the associate programme; and how the figure compares with previous years.

Mr. Brooke: In 1985 about 9,800 students were registered as associate students taking single courses from the university's undergraduate programme. In addition about 49,500 were registered on continuing education courses or purchased continuing education packs of self-study materials. In both cases the number of students is higher than in previous years.

Teachers' Dispute

16. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many days of education have been lost by schoolchildren as a result of strike action.

Mr. Dunn: Precise information is not available. However, I am aware that a very large number of pupil days have been lot or interrupted by industrial action taken by the three largest school teacher unions. Strike action has not in fact been the union's major weapon. Striking results in loss of pay and the unions have sought to minimise such a direct penalty by engaging in selective strikes of short duration and by taking other forms of action specifically designed to cause maximum disruption of the schools with minimum cost to those doing the disruption.

25. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the current teachers' pay dispute.

26. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the prospects for a settlement of the teachers' dispute.

29. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the current teachers' dispute.

30. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' pay dispute.

34. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the current teachers' dispute.

35. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' dispute.

43. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' dispute.

44. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' pay dispute.

47. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he is taking to seek to end the teachers' industrial dispute.

48. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the latest position in the teachers' pay dispute.

50. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' pay dispute.

53. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the teachers' dispute.

57. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made in resolving the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the current position in the teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Members to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Dormand) and my hon. Friends the Members for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth), Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), South Suffolk (Mr. Yeo) and Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

49. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list, by local education authority, the number of teachers who have been disciplined as a result of absenting themselves during the current teachers' dispute; and if he will list the number of pupils excluded or expelled from school for demonstrating or indicating dissent with the actions of their teachers.

Sir Keith Joseph: I understand that all local education authorities withhold pay in respect of absences due to strikes. Detailed information about disciplinary action against either teachers or pupils is not available centrally; but it does appear that teachers are able to achieve their objective of maximum disruption of education at minimum cost to themselves.

56. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met representatives of the teaching unions to discuss the present pay dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: I met representatives of the National Union of Teachers on 7 November, at their request, to discuss the pay dispute.

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what effect he expects the dispute involving the teaching profession to have on his plans to reform the secondary school examination structure.

Mr. Chris Patten: We have no reports of significant disruption to the preparations for the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education. The majority of teachers will not become involved in the training programme for the GCSE until next year.

CERN

18. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he intends to reduce Britain's contribution to the CERN project.

Mr. Brooke: The Kendrew report recommended that the United Kingdom should reduce the size of its subscription to CERN by 25 per cent. by 1991. My right hon. Friend is considering that recommendation, and the report's other recommendations.

Student Support

19. **Mr. Squire** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will review the system of student support.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend announced on 12 November at column *113* that, since the possibility of replacing maintenance grants wholly or partly with loans had been ruled out at the present time by the Government, he did not consider that any useful purpose would be served by the publication of a consultative paper on student support.

Higher Education (Grants)

20. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will undertake a survey to establish the number of school leavers who attained adequate educational standards for acceptance for further and higher educational courses in 1985, but who would not take up their places on such courses because of their inability to secure a grant sufficient to enable them to pursue these courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys has been commissioned by the Department to carry out a survey of young people's intentions to enter higher education; and the Department has also commissioned, jointly with the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission, a youth cohort study which will focus on the various routes taken by 16 to 18-year-olds through education, training, and the labour market. An important part of both surveys concerns the decisions made by those who, despite being suitably qualified, did not enter further or higher education.

Higher Education (Green Paper)

21. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the Green Paper on higher education.

Mr. Brooke: As I said in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) on 14 November at column *269*, my right hon. Friend has no plans to make a statement about responses to the Green Paper on higher education until the Government make the further statement of policy on higher education promised in the Green Paper itself.

GCSE

22. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will give a progress report on the proposed introduction of the GCSE examination system.

24. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with progress towards the introduction of GCSE examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Our plans for the introduction of the GCSE are at present on course. The GCSE examining groups and the LEAs are well advanced in their preparations for the national programme of in-service training. In readiness for these training seminars, teachers' guides and videos will be made available to schools and colleges early in January next year. Teachers are already in a position separately to begin their own preparations for the new examination courses.

31. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the proposed new examination for 16-year-olds is at a satisfactory stage of development; and if schools will be adequately funded to allow the relevant courses to be pursued.

Mr. Chris Patten: Preparations for the introduction of the GCSE, including the development of syllabuses for the new examinations are on course. The Government's expenditure plans for 1986-87 give some scope for authorities to redeploy their resources towards policies to which they wish to give priority, including the GCSE, provided they contain costs and take advantage of opportunities for efficiency savings.

Assisted Places Scheme

23. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many pupils have benefited from the assisted places scheme since it was introduced; and what has been the cost to his Department.

Mr. Dunn: Up to the end of the last school year, 18,724 pupils had benefited from the assisted places scheme. The total cost of the scheme to the Department up to the end of the last financial year was £48·9 million.

Colleges of Higher Education (Status)

27. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the issues he is taking into consideration when assessing whether a college of higher education should receive polytechnic status.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend has indicated that he would welcome advice from the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education on the addition of further institutions to the original list designated as polytechnics following publication of the 1966 White Paper "A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges", including the criteria which might govern any such addition.

Agricultural Research Council

28. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has had about cuts in the Agricultural Research Council budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: Since the announcement made on 22 January 1985 by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food of a proposed reduction in the public expenditure provision for research, development and advisory services funded by the Agriculture Departments in 1986-87 and 1987-88, my right hon. Friend has received representations from the chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council (AFRC) concerning the possible consequences for the AFRC and particularly for the research it conducts using funds from the Department's science budget. The Department has also received 37 letters from hon. Members and other interested parties directly or via the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The grant-in-aid from the Department's science budget to the AFRC in 1985-86 is £50·3 million. This includes £4·8 million to help meet the cost of AFRC's restructuring programme. Final advice on the 1986-87 allocation will be given by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils later this year and for 1987-88 a year later.

Burnham Committee

32. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the changes he has made in the constitution of the Burnham committee.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 7 November at column *2*.

Teachers (Appraisal)

33. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his plans to promote the professional effectiveness of teachers.

37. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for the assessment of teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government intend to introduce legislation with this aim during the current session. The new Education Bill will provide for the extension of my right hon. Friend power to grant-aid in-service training for teachers. Provision will also be made to enable my right hon. Friend to require local education authorities regularly to appraise the performance of their teachers. Whether, and if so when and how, this enabling power will be used will depend on circumstances, including the extent to which progress can be made towards introducing appraisal by agreement between teachers and their employers.

University Funding

36. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what recent representations he has received from the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on university funding.

51. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has recently had with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals about the funding of universities.

Mr. Brooke: My right hon. Friend met the full committee of vice-chancellors and principals on 26 September to discuss a wide range of issues arising from the Green Paper on "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s"; on 16 October he met representatives of the committee to discuss university funding and the pay of university staff.

Schoolchildren (Transport)

38. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now introduce free transport for all schoolchildren travelling to and from school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

39. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the current pupil-teacher ratios in primary and secondary schools, respectively; and if he expects these to change in the next three years.

Mr. Dunn: Average pupil to teacher ratios within primary and secondary schools respectively were 22·2:1 and 16·1:1 in England in January 1985. The overall ratio of pupils to teachers nationally was at its best ever level of 17·8:1. The Government recognise that their policies for better schools imply some further limited improvement in the overall pupil to teacher ratio but the extent and pace of this improvement will depend on future public expenditure plans, changes in the cost of employing staff, and the staffing decisions of individual local authorities.

Teaching Profession (Morale)

40. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will meet local education authorities to discuss morale in the teaching profession.

Mr. Chris Patten: Both my right hon. Friend and I hold frequent meetings with representatives of the local authority associations and of individual local authorities and we are well aware of their views on the morale of the teaching profession. My right hon. Friend is aware that they would like to lift morale and thinks that can best be done through a bargain which would simultaneously raise pay levels, improve promotion prospects, introduce a new career structure, and clarify teachers' duties.

School Inspections

41. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how often inspections of schools are carried out in England and Wales; how the frequency of inspections in Leicestershire compares with the national average; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The table shows, for Leicestershire and England overall, the percentage of schools and of further and higher education institutions visited by Her Majesty's inspectors in the 1984-85 academic year:

	Percentage of institutions visited	
	Leicestershire	*England*
Schools		
Autumn 1984	6	9
Spring 1985	5	8
Summer 1985	5	8
Further and Higher Education		
Autumn 1984	92	40
Spring 1985	83	37
Summer 1985	75	42

Her Majesty's inspectors visits take a variety of forms and have a number of different purposes. They do not all lead to formal published reports.

University Research Funding

42. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the future funding of research at universities.

Mr. Brooke: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on 12 November at columns *104-108*.

Natural Environment Research Council

45. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the work of the Natural Environment Research Council.

Mr. Brooke: Overviews of the past and likely future work of the Natural Environment Research Council are given respectively in the council's reports, which are published annually, and in its corporate plan. A copy of the council's 1983-84 report was laid before the House on 29 November 1984; a copy of its report for 1984-85 will be laid before the House on 21 November. A copy of the council's corporate plan 1985-90 (published in February 1985) is available in the Library.

Inner London Education Authority

46. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the leader of the Inner London education authority; and what subjects were discussed.

Sir Keith Joseph: My last formal meeting with the leader of the Inner London education authority took place on 19 November 1984. Subjects discussed included legislation relating to the abolition of the GLC and reconstitution of the ILEA, the new authority's tenure in county hall, the statutory procedure to be followed in opening new nursery classes, and the authority's 1985-86 budget.

Student Grants

52. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the level of student grants for 1986-87.

Mr. Brooke: A statement will be made in the next few weeks.

Teachers (Civic Affairs)

54. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he proposes to take in the near future to improve the supply of teachers of civic affairs.

Mr. Chris Patten: Civic affairs is not identified separately as a main subject for the purposes of initial teacher training allocations, although it is possible that some training courses with the main subject in history or social studies will include some specific reference to this area. My right hon. Friend has no evidence to suggest that the demand for teachers in these latter subjects is not being met. More generally, it is now a requirement of initial training courses of all kinds that they should give students a basic understanding of the society in which their pupils are growing up.

School Hours

55. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to introduce continental hours for schools.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities already have, and in some cases exercise, a considerable degree of flexibility in their arrangements, while complying, as they must, with the relevant provisions of the Education (Schools and Further Education) Regulations 1981.

Schools (Toilet Facilities)

58. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to seek to ensure that all state schools are provided with modern toilet facilities.

Mr. Dunn: It is for local education authorities to decide their own priorities for capital expenditure in their schools in the light of local needs and the resources available to them.

School Playgrounds (Paint)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will seek powers to require that only lead-free or low-lead paint is used for apparatus in school playgrounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No. DOE circular 22/82 "Lead in the Environment" stated that it was undesirable and unnecessary to use high lead paint on surfaces accessible to children, and advised local authorities to specify low-lead paint for schools, parks and recreation grounds. Last year the local authorities management services and computer committee (LAMSAC) made more detailed recommendations to local authorities to specify paint with a lead content no higher than the maximum permitted under the Toys (Safety) Regulations 1974, when purchasing new playground equipment or treating old apparatus.

Civil Engineering Graduates

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of students graduating in each of the last 10 years in civil engineering in *(a)* universities and *(b)* public sector higher education.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

Civil engineering graduates

	GB universities		*United Kingdom CNAA**	
	First degree	*Higher degree*	*First degree*	*Higher degree*
1974	1,583	447	596	—
1975	1,678	553	657	—
1976	1,704	517	623	—
1977	1,780	516	793	—
1978	1,816	524	776	1
1979	1,943	468	733	—
1980	1,989	545	995	—
1981	1,945	564	932	11
1982	1,790	599	640	16
1983	1,756	659	662	6

* Degrees processed during the year, not those awarded.

Information for 1984 is not yet available.

Graduates (First Degrees)

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will break down by subjects the number of graduates gaining first degrees in British universities and in public sector institutions for each of the last five years; and what forward projections have been made for the next five years.

Mr. Brooke: The information is given in the table below:

Total numbers of 1st degrees awarded
Great Britain

Thousands

	Actual						*Projected*			
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
All Subjects	86·6	93·1	95·8	97·8	102·2	108·7	107·3	107·5	106·0	105·9
Education	4·1	4·6	4·8	4·7	5·2	6·1	6·7	6·7	6·8	6·9
Medicine	5·9	6·0	5·9	6·2	6·4	6·5	6·5	6·1	6·0	6·1
Engineering and Technology	13·0	13·8	14·2	14·4	14·6	15·2	15·2	15·4	15·7	15·9
Agriculture	1·2	1·3	1·3	1·3	1·4	1·3	1·3	1·3	1·2	1·2
Maths and Science	17·0	17·5	19·0	19·7	20·4	22·2	21·8	21·7	21·9	22·1
Social Sciences	24·0	24·1	25·1	25·9	27·1	28·4	27·3	27·7	27·1	26·8
Architecture and Professional Studies	1·9	3·0	2·8	2·7	3·1	3·4	3·6	3·7	3·7	3·8
Languages	8·9	9·4	9·9	10·0	10·2	10·4	9·9	9·8	9·5	9·5
Other and Creative Arts	10·7	13·4	12·7	12·8	13·7	15·2	15·1	15·0	14·1	13·6

Notes:

1. DES estimates based on data from the Universities Statistical Record and the CNAA.
2. Degrees awarded in public sector institutions but validated by Universities are excluded.

National Youth Advisory Council

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will be in a position to announce the composition of the National Youth Advisory Council.

Mr. Dunn: Professor Walter James has been appointed chairman of the National Advisory Council for the Youth Service. Invitations to others to serve have been issued and my right hon. Friend will announce the composition of the council shortly.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Kent)

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the pupil-teacher ratio in Kent today, compared to the figures in 1979 and 1981.

Mr. Dunn: The overall pupil-teacher ratio in maintained schools in Kent in the years 1979, 1981 and 1985 was 20·0, 20·0 and 19·0 respectively.

University Teachers

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the salaries of university teachers have kept pace with the retail price index and with average earnings since 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: Between April 1979 and April 1984 (the date of the last pay increase) pay settlements for university non-clinical academic and related staff have out-stripped the retail prices index by 9·8 per cent. and fallen behind the Average Earnings Index by 1·6 per cent.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how the pupil-teacher ratio in Hampshire and in Portsmouth today compares with 1975, 1979 and 1981.

Mr. Dunn: The overall pupil-teacher ratio in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in Hampshire in 1975, 1979, 1981 and 1985 was 20·7, 20·2, 20·0 and 19·6 respectively. Equivalent figures for Portsmouth are not available.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tanzania

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) whether the main contractor for the Songea to Makambako road, Tanzania, has been given a deadline for the completion of the contract;

(2) when is the estimated completion date of the Songea to Makambako road, Tanzania.

Mr. Raison: The estimated completion date set in the contract was 30 November 1985, but the certificate of substantial completion was issued on 23 September 1985 and the road is to be formally opened by President Mwinyi in the presence of HRH Princess Anne on 20 November 1985.

Agricultural Development (Africa)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is his intention to increase Britain's contribution to the special fund for agricultural development in Africa as set up by the United Nations.

Mr. Raison: I assume that the hon. Member has in mind the special programme for African countries suffering from drought and desertification, which is being established by the international fund for agricultural development. This is a new, voluntary programme, and we have not yet made any commitment to contribute to it. My Department will consider the possibility of a United Kingdom contribution as and when the more fundamental question of the second replenishment of IFAD's basic resources has been settled.

Traditional Crops (Africa)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the Government are doing to increase aid to research in African countries in order to increase the yield of traditional African crops.

Mr. Raison: Effective research is vital to increasing crop yields and we are seeking to improve our aid in this sector in several ways. We have already restructured the Tropical Development and Research Institute so that it can be more responsive to ODA's priority needs. We intend to maintain and if possible increase the funds allocated for agricultural research contracts. We have recently increased the contributions we make to the International Agricultural Research Centres working in Africa, particularly the International Centre for Research in the Semi-arid Tropics, which works mainly on sorghum and millets, two important traditional African crops. We also attach priority to the provision of manpower assistance and training in this field and are looking for ways of encouraging requests from African countries.

Food Production (Africa)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amount of British aid to the African countries is used to promote increased local food production.

Mr. Raison: Since food and other forms of agricultural production are not readily distinguishable even at farm level, no separate figures for British aid to promote local food production alone are available. Our aid to agricultural and related activities in sub-Saharan Africa in 1984 totalled £66 million.

Africa (Aid)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by how much he intends increasing the amount of British aid to African countries in order to increase their local food production.

Mr. Raison: I cannot quantify this, but we shall continue to aim to increase the aid we provide to agricultural and food production wherever we can do so to reinforce sensible recipient country policies.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Laser 558 Radio Station

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the circumstances surrounding the actions taken with regard to the Laser 558 radio station, and the statutory basis for such actions.

Mr. Butcher: The Department of Trade and Industry chartered a survey vessel on 8 August to observe supply traffic to the two marine broadcasting stations operating off the Essex coast. Evidence of a considerable number of possible offences has already been passed to the police both in the United Kingdom and in continental countries. Decisions on the prosecutions of United Kingdom

nationals and residents for offences against the Marine Etc. Broadcasting (Offences) Act will be made by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

On 6 November, the vessel Communicator, from which Laser 558 broadcasts had been made, sailed to Harwich harbour following a generator breakdown. The Communicator requested and received escort assistance from the DTI's chartered vessel. I understand that the Communicator is at present under the control of the Admiralty marshal following action by an individual and a private company.

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the costs of any action taken regarding the commercial radio station Laser 558.

Mr. Butcher: The costs of the Department's surveillance operation in the North sea are around £25,000 per month, including the costs of charter and staff costs. The operation has been directed against both Radio Caroline and Radio Laser 558.

Radio Stations (International Waters)

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will explain Her Majesty's Government's attitude and policy towards independent commercial radio stations operating in international waters.

Mr. Butcher: The Government are seriously concerned at the activities of unlicensed marine broadcasters who use radio frequencies allocated for other, legitimate purposes, and whose powerful unregulated transmissions can and do cause interference to other radio users, including safety of life services. For example, helicopter navigational beacons in the North sea have been permanently disrupted by pirate transmissions on frequencies close to the beacons, and marine radio services and navigational beacons have been disrupted by faulty transmitters on individual occasions. The arrival of Radio Caroline interfered with transmissions on certain university and hospital radios, which had to change frequencies at considerable expense. The frequency 558 kHz used by Radio Laser and now in use by Radio Caroline has been allocated to BBC Radio Essex by international agreement, and existing broadcasts from Irish and German stations have suffered interference.

Frequency assignment is a complex process. The spectrum space available is allocated by international agreement and by the DTI as the nationals regulatory body. Pirate broadcasters cut across this and steal scarce spectrum to the detriment of lawful users.

The Government also have international obligations, as International Radio Regulation 2665 prohibits broadcasting from ships outside national territories. The United Kingdom is a signatory to a 1965 European convention in which signatories undertook to take steps to prevent broadcasts through legislative means.

It is open to those who wish to broadcast from within the United Kingdom to apply for Independent Broadcasting Authority franchises when these are advertised from time to time. It was also open to unlicensed broadcasters to apply for experimental community radio licences before the deadline of 31 October 1985.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what form he expects the exploitation of software engineering work under the Alvey programme within the next year or so to take.

Mr. Butcher: We expect to see a number of items of prototype software emerging from the Alvey software engineering programme and being placed in the hands of evaluators during the next two years. These should include prototypes of the two first generation integrated project support environments (IPSES) being developed under Alvey's aspect and eclipse projects, which will become available in a number of increments, each more powerful than the previous one. There should also be a wide range of prototypes covering, for example, test specification and quality measurement, design including design with intelligent Knowledge based system support, prototyping tools, tools to support formal methods of specification, tools for documentation. Specific products relating to these will be expected to enter the market in due course.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has about approaches for the purchase of intellectual property rights arising from Alvey-funded projects, by the United States Government or United States based companies, to any of the companies or academic institutions funded under the Alvey programme.

Mr. Butcher: I have received no information about any such approaches.

Industrial Development

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what changes there have been in the financial incentives for industrial development available to firms in Great Grimsby since May 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Great Grimsby is part of the Grimsby travel-to-work area which was a development area until November 1984, when it was regraded as an intermediate area following the review of regional policy. The effect of this is that firms in Great Grimsby are no longer eligible for regional development grants but remain eligible for regional selective assistance and the full range of nationally-available incentives to industry.

Sumrie plc

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the Companies Act inquiry into Sumrie plc is still proceeding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Inquiries are concluded and information obtained is under consideration.

Motor Vehicles (Departmental Purchases)

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many cars, vans and trucks are purchased by Government Departments each year; and what is the breakdown of these statistics by make of vehicle and by Department.

Mr. Butcher: This information is not held centrally and would only be obtainable at disproportionate cost. Each Department is responsible for purchasing its own

vehicles and in the year to 30 October 1985 my Department purchased 75 vehicles comprising 28 cars (18 Austin Rover, 10 Ford), 44 vans (40 Ford, two Freight Rover, two Bedford) and three Land Rovers.

European Ferries

Mr. Bagier asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government assistance was sought by European Ferries to seek to place its order for two new ferries with British shipyards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No request for assistance has been made to my Department by European Ferries in respect of its requirement for two new ferries. My Department does assist British shipyards by way of the shipbuilding intervention fund to enable yards to offer owners attractive contract prices.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he expects to negotiate a new multi-fibre arrangement no worse than the present arrangement in order to help the British textile industry.

Mr. Channon: I made clear the Government's position on the MFA during the debate in the House on 9 May. Discussions in the European Community on a negotiating position for both the multilateral and bilateral negotiations are likely to start in the next few weeks and we are in close touch with interested parties in the United Kingdom in preparation for these.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement regarding progress on renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon: Discussions in the European Community on a negotiating position for both the multilateral and bilateral negotiations are likely to start in the next few weeks and we are in close touch with interested parties in the United Kingdom in preparation for these.

Financial Aid Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing the applications for *(a)* regional development grants and *(b)* selective financial assistance in each year since 1979, and by each standard region.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985, c. *23*]: I regret that the information requested is not available for section 8 grants or on a regional basis for regional development grants (RDG). However, the tables show the number and value of applications for regional selective assistance (section 7) by region and the number of applications and related capital expenditure for RDG for GB only.

Section 7 Assistance—Number and Value of Applications

£ million

Financial Years / *Region*	*1979-80*		*1980-81*		*1981-82*		*1982-83*		*1983-84*		*1984-85*		*Total*	
	No.	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*
Scotland	323	102·6	104	32·4	199	66·0	291	69·4	289	111·3	281	172·3	1,487	554·0
Wales	214	35·4	129	35·2	234	31·9	311	37·9	383	84·2	310	69·8	1,581	294·3
Northern	176	34·3	65	25·2	86	21·9	204	30·8	252	70·6	167	29·8	950	212·6
North West	422	65·7	181	26·9	195	29·4	294	37·1	212	30·6	203	24·4	1,507	214·1
Yorkshire Humberside	183	20·3	61	6·6	271	31·7	185	23·2	208	18·6	188	39·8	1,096	140·2
East Midlands	34	6·2	29	3·2	121	22·1	107	11·7	91	12·6	54	6·6	436	62·4
West Midlands	3	0·1	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	40	11·0	43	11·1
South West	51	4·4	14	5·1	39	3·3	43	1·8	59	11·4	57	13·1	263	39·1

RDG—Number of Applications and Related Capital Expenditure

£ million

Financial Years	*1979-80*		*1980-81*		*1981-82*		*1982-83*		*1983-84*		*1984-85*		*Total*	
	No.	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*	*No.*	*Value*
Great Britain	39,984	2,400	39,858	3,900	27,735	2,600	24,246	2,500	25,147	2,200	28,189	2,500	185,159	16,100

Trade Statistics

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of total United Kingdom manufacturing industrial output is represented by *(a)* automobiles and *(b)* electronics in 1979 and each of the subsequent years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985, c. *21*]: In 1980, the latest year for which firm figures are available, automobile output (cars, commercial vehicles and components) accounted for 5½ per cent. of all manufacturing activity while, on a broad definition, 'electronics' accounted for 6 per cent. Estimates suggest that in 1984 the contribution of the automobile industry to the manufacturing total has fallen, while that of electronics may have risen.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Trials (Juries)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will take steps to change the procedural rule in criminal trials whereby a jury must stay together from the moment it begins to consider its verdict until it has arrived at a conclusion.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to do so.

Sikender Hyat

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions were given to the governor of Ashford remand centre regarding the delivery of Sikender Hyat to Heathrow on Saturday 26 October to be sent back to Pakistan; what information was given to his relatives; why he was not so delivered on that date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Following the withdrawal of the hon. Member's representations, directions for Mr. Hyat's removal to Pakistan on 26 October were given by the immigration officer on 22 October. Immigration service records indicate that a request was passed on 22 October to the prison service at Ashford remand centre to take Mr. Hyat to Harmondsworth on the morning of 26 October. Relatives of Mr. Hyat were advised on 22 and 24 October of the removal directions and came to the airport to see him before his departure. There is no record at Ashford remand centre of the receipt of the request from the immigration service; no arrangements were made to convey Mr. Hyat and it was therefore not possible to remove him as directed. New directions were given for removal on 29 October, his relatives were advised and were able to see Mr. Hyat before his departure. Apologies were offered on 26 October by the immigration service to the relatives.

We very much regret this failure in communication between the staff at Ashford remand centre and those in the immigration service. Arrangements were in hand, before this incident occurred, to discuss ways to overcome the problems of communications which had already been identified. This work will now be taken forward to try to ensure that such a mistake does not occur again.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of west European countries which operate extensive Sunday trading.

Mr. Waddington: At least one West European country operates extensive Sunday trading, and all West European countries do so to some degree.

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the number and categories of people engaged in Sunday trading in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: The Department keeps no record of the number and categories of people engaged in Sunday trading in the United Kingdom.

Brixton Prison

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baths, showers and toilets are available in Brixton prison; how many baths or showers each prisoner is allowed each week; and how many changes of clothes each prisoner is allowed each week.

Mr. Mellor: Sixteen baths, 56 showers, 91 WCs and 54 urinals are available in Brixton prison. In general, all prisoners have access to a bath or shower daily. This routine may be varied for medical cases or for prisoners appearing at court. Prison clothing is exchanged at least once a week but more frequently if considered necessary —for example, for prisoners on kitchen parties and some other work parties. Unconvicted prisoners may wear private clothing, and this may be exchanged on visits.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms of reference of the Welsh consultative committee of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Waddington: I am informed that the terms of reference of the Welsh consultative committee are as follows:

A. To provide a forum for consultation on policy issues referred to them by the Commission;
B. to raise, discuss and refer to the Commission for determination, policy issues which they feel the Commission should be considering;
C. in particular, to provide through discussion an insight into the effectiveness of the Commission's service delivery in the region as perceived by the consumers; and
D. to meet no more than three times a year for the purposes set out above.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the members of the Commission for Racial Equality are designated as having special responsibilities, either on a geographical or functional basis; and if he will list these in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Waddington: I understand from the chairman of the commission that the allocation of special geographical responsibilities is as follows:

Mr. Lincoln Crawford	:	the south of England
Mrs. Shreela Flather	:	Wales
Mr. Alan Gayton	:	the east midlands
Dr. Farrukh Hashmi	:	the west midlands
Miss Ethel Houston	:	Scotland
Mr. Gursharan Singh Sarang	:	the north-west
Mr. Gerald Tyler	:	the north-east

The commission has four functional sub-committees whose membership is as follows:

Field Services Committee
Miss Ethel Houston
Mrs. Lily Khan
Mr. William Morris
Mr. Clifton Robinson *(Chairman)*
Mr. Gursharan Singh Sarang

Complaints Committee
Mr. Lincoln Crawford
Mr. E. Gilmour Jones
Mrs. Lily Khan
Mr. William Morris *(Chairman)*
Mr. Clifton Robinson
Mr. Gerald Tyler

Employment Committee
Mr. Alan Gayton *(Chairman)*
Mr. Kenneth Gill
Professor Bhiku Parekh
Mr. Clifton Robinson
Mr. Gursharan Singh Sarang
Mr. Keith Whitesides

Education, Housing and Services Committee
Mr. Lincoln Crawford
Mrs. Shreela Flather *(Chairman)*
Dr. Farrukh Hashmi
Professor Bhiku Parekh
Mr. Clifton Robinson
Mr. Gerald Tyler

Individual commissioners may also take responsibility for the conduct of particular formal investigations undertaken by the commission.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the

names of the members of the Welsh consultative committee of the Commission for Racial Equality together with the dates on which they were appointed and the duration of their period on this committee.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that members of the commission's Welsh consultative committee are initially appointed for periods of two years, but that they may then be reappointed at the discretion of the commission. I am informed that the current membership of the committee is as follows:

Name	*First appointed*
Councillor Mrs. S. Flather (Chairman)	June 1981
Mr. J. Carlile	June 1981
Mr. S. Clarke	June 1981
Dr. H. Cohen	June 1981
Mr. J. Davies	June 1981
Councillor Mrs. J. Lysaght	June 1981
Mr. A. Matthews	Summer 1982
Mr. R. Mooneeran	June 1981
Mr. N. Ramanadan	June 1981
Mr. D. Seligman	June 1981
Mr. V. White MBE	June 1981
*Mr. D. M. Rolph	June 1981
Mr. P. Jones	November 1984
Mr. B. Ashley	April 1984
Insp. C. Francis	November 1984

* Mr. D. M. Rolph represents the Welsh Office.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many instances during the past 12 months he has met community leaders from Wales to discuss the working of the Commission for Racial Equality in Wales.

Mr. Waddington: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend have had such meetings.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Commission for Racial Equality set up its Welsh consultative committee.

Mr. Waddington: I understand that the Welsh consultative committee of the Commission for Racial Equality first met on 16 June 1981.

Security Co-operation

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any changes are planned in security co-operation between the police and Ministry of Defence personnel following the discovery of bombs outside Chelsea barracks.

Mr. Hurd: No; there is close and well-established co-operation which is kept under constant review.

Deputy Secretaries (Responsibilities)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and ranks of staff reporting to each.

Mr. Hurd: The information at 1 November 1985 is as follows:

Deputy Secretary:	Criminal, general and statistical departments: and research and planning unit: Three under-secretaries, one chief research officer and 528 other staff
Deputy Secretary:	Police department: Three under-secretaries, controller, forensic science service and 2,645 other staff
Deputy Secretary:	Broadcasting, community programmes and equal opportunities, immigration and nationality, and passport departments: Three under-secretaries and 3,933 other staff
Deputy Secretary:	Establishments, fire and emergency planning, finance and manpower departments: Three under-secretaries, one director of information services and 1,982 other staff
Deputy Secretary:	Legal adviser's branch: Two principal assistant legal advisers and 26 other staff
Deputy Secretary:	Director-general of the prison service: One deputy director-general, three under-secretaries, one director, prison medical services and 27,580 other staff.

Tottenham (Police Action)

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the numbers according to age, sex and ethnic origin of Tottenham people arrested and taken to the police station; for how long they were held incommunicable; how many have subsequently been charged since Sunday 6 October; and how many remain in custody;

(2) how many house searches have been recorded in the Tottenham and St. Anns police station areas; how many followed the arrest of a household member; how many entrances were made forcibly; how many charges have been made and how many convictions have been recorded since 6 October compared with the average for each of the past 12 months; and if he will set out the information according to ethnic and sex classification;

(3) if he will list the number of stop and search incidents recorded in the Tottenham and St. Anns police station areas of London during each of the past 12 months; how many arrests and convictions have been recorded as a result; and if he will set out the information according to age, ethnic classification and sex.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Portsmouth and Southampton (Broadcasting Franchise)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about representations received by the Independent Broadcasting Authority concerning the broadcasting franchise for the Portsmouth and Southampton area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the Independent Broadcasting Authority, which is responsible for the award of contracts under the Broadcasting Act 1981, has received approximately 70 representations about its recent decision on the award of the local radio contract for Portsmouth and Southampton.

Fire Casualties

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the deaths by fire for each year since 1979 where there was evidence that the possibility of escape was prevented by domestic double-glazed windows.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not collected centrally on a regular basis. A special exercise

over July 1983 to June 1984 revealed no cases where the presence of double-glazing was a material factor in causing fire fatalities. This and the examination of specific cases in England and Wales drawn to our attention suggests that there are very few such incidents.

Prevention of Terrorism

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been *(a)* questioned and *(b)* charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act for each month since January 1984; and, of those questioned but not charged, what records of the questioning are retained by the police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Under article 4 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Supplemental Temporary Provisions) Order 1984 there is a power to examine persons arriving in or leaving Great Britain. Such examinations often last for only a few minutes, but article 9 gives authority for the detention of persons pending the conclusion of his examination or pending consideration of the question whether to make an exclusion order against him. There are also powers to arrest and detain under section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984.

The number of people detained under article 9 and section 12, and charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1984 for each month since January 1984, is:

1984	*Detained*	*Charged*
January	11	—
February	16	2
March	29	—
April	19	1
May	19	1
June	10	—
July	29	2
August	9	—
September	8	2
October	15	—
November	20	3
December	18	2
Total	203	13
1985		
January	20	—
February	6	—
March	7	1
April	19	1
May	13	1
June	56	8
July	18	—
August	17	1
September	21	—
Total	177	12

Records are not available for persons examined for less than one hour under article 4 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Supplemental Temporary Provisions) Order 1984. Figures for the number of people examined for more than one hour under article 4 are available only since 22 March 1984, when the 1984 Act came into force. They are:

1984	*Number*
March	—
April	7
May	9
June	2
July	3
August	3
September	2
October	8
November	6
December	3
Total	43
1985	
January	2
February	5
March	3
April	4
May	5
June	9
July	3
August	5
September	4
Total	40

Records of all persons examined for more than one hour under article 4 or detained under article 9 or section 12 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act are kept by the police.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people questioned under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Scotland were subsequently transferred to England for further questioning during the past two years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Nine.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the last year authority has been given for the use of firearms by police in each police authority.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The table shows the number of operations involving criminals or other persons known or believed to be armed in which firearms were issued to the police, and the number of occasions on which they were fired, in 1984.

Police force	*Number of operations in respect of which firearms were issued*	*Number of operations in which firearms were fired*
Avon and Somerset	17	
Bedfordshire	10	
Cambridgeshire	8	
Cheshire	13	
Cleveland	8	
City of London	4	
Cumbria	5	
Derbyshire	8	
Devon and Cornwall	28	
Dorset	27	
Durham	10	1
Essex	44	1
Gloucestershire	7	
Greater Manchester	52	
Hampshire	23	1
Hertfordshire	27	
Humberside	56	
Kent	37	
Lancashire	35	
Leicestershire	8	
Lincolnshire	2	
Merseyside	61	
Metropolitan	1,838	3
Norfolk	13	

Police force	Number of operations in respect of which firearms were issued	Number of operations in which firearms were fired
Northamptonshire	6	
Northumbria	15	
North Yorkshire	14	
Nottinghamshire	10	
South Yorkshire	13	
Staffordshire	5	
Suffolk	17	
Surrey	32	
Sussex	51	
Thames Valley	17	
Warwickshire	8	
West Mercia	12	
West Midlands	17	
West Yorkshire	78	
Wiltshire	12	
Dyfed Powys	3	
Gwent	2	
North Wales	10	
South Wales	4	
TOTAL	2,667	6

Note: These figures relate only to police operations involving criminals or other persons known or believed to be armed. They do not include the issue of firearms for protection purposes or the issue and use of firearms to destroy injured or dangerous animals.

Police (Establishment)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Deaprtment if he will list, for each police authority, the total establishment and the number of post holders for each year since 1979.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 30 September 1985 the authorised establishment and strength of police forces in England and Wales was as follows. Similar information for 31 December of each year since 1979 is shown in appendix 7 to the annual published reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

Police Force	Authorised Establishment	Police Strength
Avon and Somerset	3,020	2,988
Bedfordshire	1,000	977
Cambridgeshire	1,140	1,136
Cheshire	1,845	1,804
Cleveland	1,474	1,458
Cumbria	1,128	1,110
Derbyshire	1,767	1,762
Devon and Cornwall	2,739	2,738
Dorset	1,203	1,186
Durham	1,357	1,297
Dyfed Powys	934	919
Essex	2,673	2,661
Gloucestershire	1,164	1,146
Greater Manchester	6,943	6,782
Gwent	978	970
Hampshire	3,084	3,076
Hertfordshire	1,578	1,577
Humberside	1,972	1,917
Kent	2,875	2,848
Lancashire	3,158	3,019
Leicestershire	1,733	1,738
Lincolnshire	1,183	1,144
Merseyside	4,607	4,567
Norfolk	1,278	1,248
Northamptonshire	1,031	1,023
Northumbria	3,378	3,358
North Wales	1,316	1,257
North Yorkshire	1,368	1,362
Nottinghamshire	2,259	2,191
South Wales	3,109	3,065
South Yorkshire	2,872	2,821
Staffordshire	2,104	2,096
Suffolk	1,136	1,130
Surrey	1,626	1,609
Sussex	2,830	2,806
Thames Valley	3,317	3,295
Warwickshire	925	927
West Mercia	1,953	1,926
West Midlands	6,684	6,549
West Yorkshire	5,154	5,015
Wiltshire	1,045	1,030
City of London	798	777
Metropolitan	27,165	26,681
Total	120,903	118,986

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the occasions on which the Metropolitan police armoured cars have been used in the past year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No, it would not be in the interest of security to do so.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions over the past 12 months the Metropolitan police air support unit has used Hele-Tele surveillance cameras; what were the occasions and who authorised their use; and on what occasion Hele-Tele was first used operationally by the air support unit.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that over the past 12 months the Hele-Tele surveillance camera was used by his air support unit on about 30 occasions for the following purposes:

(i) to assist security operations at such events as state visits, Trooping the Colour and the moving of high-risk prisoners from prison to court;
(ii) to assist with traffic control at major sporting events such as the Cup Final;
(iii) to assist with the command and control of police officers deployed at demonstrations and marches; and
(iv) to assist in the preparation of training exercises.

The Commissioner assures us that on each occasion the use of the Hele-Tele was fully within the guidelines for the use of equipment in police surveillance operations, a copy of which is in the Library. Authority was given in each case by the commander in charge of the operation.

Hele-Tele was first use at the Notting Hill Gate carnival in 1977.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Metropolitan police first acquired stocks of CS gas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that the Metropolitan police first acquired CS in the early 1960s, for criminal siege purposes.

Crowd Control Equipment

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those police authorities which currently hold stocks of *(a)* CS gas, *(b)* plastic bullets,

(c) riot shields and *(d)* water cannon; and if he will indicate any additions to the list which have occurred during the last year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The following police forces in England and Wales are understood to hold plastic baton rounds and/or CS gas:

Force	*Baton rounds*	*CS gas*
Metropolitan police	Yes	Yes
Avon and Somerset	Yes	Yes
Bedfordshire	No	Yes
Cambridgeshire	No	*Yes
Cheshire	No	Yes
City of London	No	Yes
Cleveland	No	*Yes
Derbyshire	No	Yes
Durham	No	*Yes
Essex	Yes	Yes
Gloucestershire	No	*Yes
Greater Manchester	*Yes	Yes
Hampshire	No	Yes
Hertfordshire	No	Yes
Humberside	Yes	Yes
Kent	*Yes	Yes
Lancashire	Yes	Yes
Leicestershire	Yes	Yes
Lincolnshire	No	Yes
Merseyside	Yes	Yes
Norfolk	No	Yes
Northumbria	No	Yes
North Wales	Yes	No
North Yorkshire	Yes	Yes
Nottinghamshire	No	Yes
South Yorkshire	No	Yes
Staffordshire	No	*Yes
Suffolk	No	Yes
Sussex	Yes	Yes
Warwickshire	Yes	Yes
West Mercia	No	Yes
West Midlands	No	Yes
Wiltshire	No	Yes

Notes:

Stocks of CS gas indicated are intended primarily for public order purposes.

* Indicates additions to the list during the last year.

All police forces in England and Wales have stocks of riot shields.

No police force in England and Wales holds operational water cannon, but the Metropolitan police are working with the Home Office in evaluating two prototype water cannon.

Cenotaph (Wreath)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to whom facilities for laying a wreath at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday currently afforded to the Greater London council, will be granted after 1 April 1986.

Mr. Hurd: No decision has been made about the wreath hitherto laid by the chairman of the Greater London council. I shall inform the hon. Member as soon as a decision has been made.

Drug Trafficking

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to give details of the Government's proposals for legislation to provide for the confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: A statement of the Government's proposals has been placed in the Library and in the Vote Office. It is intended to bring forward legislation shortly to give effect to these proposals. Copies of the statement are also available on request from the Home Office, C4 division, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AT (telephone 01-213 3747).

Handsworth Riots

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the report of the chief constable of the west midlands on the rioting in the Lozells road area of Handsworth in September to be published.

Mr. Hurd: The chief constable is publishing his report today. I am placing copies in the Library. The report provides a clear account of the disorders and more generally is a most important and valuable contribution to consideration of the lessons to be learnt from the recent disorders in Birmingham and elsewhere.

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make available the draft guidance on the operation of the controls proposed in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. A draft note of guidance on the introduction of new controls on scientific procedures performed on living animals has been prepared. Copies have been placed in the Library and are available in the Vote Office.

Interested organisations have been sent copies of the draft and asked for their comments on it. Copies of subsequent drafts of the note will also be made available to the House in the same way.

Crown Courts (Acquittals)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage and how many in number, of defendants who have pleaded not guilty to offences tried in the Crown courts have been acquitted in each of the past five years.

The Solicitor-General: I have been asked to reply.

The percentage and number of defendants dealt with in the Crown court in each of the years 1980 and 1984 who pleaded not guilty to all counts and who were acquitted on all counts is shown in the following table.

Committals for Trial in the Crown Court in England and Wales

	Defendants pleading not guilty to all counts	
	Number acquitted on all counts	*Percentage acquitted on all counts*
1980	14,238	50
1981	14,805	50
1982	14,195	49
1983	14,603	50
1984	14,554	51

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from Bangladesh have *(a)* been given temporary admission to the United Kingdom and *(b)* absconded in each month since January 1984.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. 181]: I regret that the information requested in the first part of the question is not available. Information about the number of people from Bangladesh who have absconded and cannot be traced is available only from terminal 3 at Heathrow. It is as follows:

	Number
1985	
January-March	16
April-June	5
July-September	30
October	12
Total	63
1984	
January-December	7
Total	7

The figures relate to the date on which the individual on temporary admission should have reported to an immigration officer or the police.

A person is not, however, counted as an absconder until efforts over a period of time have failed to trace him, and the figures for recent months are therefore subject to revision as inquiries are completed in further cases. The figures are therefore higher than those given in answer to a question from the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) on 29 October.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Afghanistan

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current relations with Afghanistan.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 11 November 1985 to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry). We have no substantive relations with Afghanistan. Following the Soviet invasion in December 1979, we withdrew Her Majesty's ambassador in Kabul and suspended our aid programme to Afghanistan.

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has requested the United States Government at the forthcoming summit meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev to raise the continuing Soviet occupation of Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: In President Reagan's speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 24 October he named Afghanistan as one of the five regional conflicts which he intended to raise with Mr. Gorbachev at the Geneva summit talks.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many illegal immigrants entered Hong Kong in each of the past six months; and if he will give comparable figures for the previous year.

Mr. Renton: It is not possible to give exact figures. The most reliable indicators are the numbers arrested at the Hong Kong-China border while trying to enter Hong Kong illegally, and the numbers arrested after entry, having evaded the security forces at the border. The figures for the past six months and the comparable figures for the same period last year are:

	Number of border arrests	
	1984	*1985*
May	750	1,033
June	734	1,059
July	602	1,065
August	838	993
September	1,342	1,364
October	1,139	1,935

	Number of evaders arrested	
	1984	*1985*
May	[illegible]	289
June	[illegible]	245
July	214	206
August	253	299
September	275	258
October	261	296

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Hong Kong Government intend to issue a new identity card; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government intend to issue two new types of identity cards with effect from 1 July 1987. These are "Permanent Hong Kong Identity Cards", which state that a holder has right of abode in Hong Kong, and "Hong Kong Identity Cards", for those who do not have right of abode.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to grant an amnesty to illegal immigrants now resident in Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: No. The Hong Kong Government have made it clear that all illegal immigrants arrested either on or after entry into Hong Kong from China will be repatriated.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of persons who have emigrated from Hong Kong in each of the past six years to the latest available date.

Mr. Renton: The number of Hong Kong residents (Hong Kong British passport holders and Hong Kong Certificate of Identity holders) who have emigrated from Hong Kong in each of the past six years and in the first half of this year are:

	Number
1979	12,774
1980	18,602
1981	18,195
1982	21,143
1983	22,209
1984	21,522
1985*	2,535

* Up to end of June. The corresponding figure for 1984 was 5,947.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the current border security between Hong Kong and China; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Yes. I believe that deployment of the British garrison and the Royal Hong Kong police force at the Hong Kong-China border is adequate to control the influx of would-be illegal immigrants, an increasing proportion of whom are now being arrested at the border rather than in the urban area of Hong Kong.

On 13 November the Hong Kong Government held useful talks in Hong Kong, covering this and other border liaison matters, with the relevant Guangdong provincial authorities of the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of illegal immigrants from China in Hong Kong in each of the past six years to the latest available date.

Mr. Renton: Prior to the ending of the "Touch base" policy on 24 October 1980, illegal immigrants from China who had managed to evade capture at the border and to reach the urban area were allowed to remain in Hong Kong. Those whose stay was regularised in this manner totalled 102,826 in 1979 and 61,094 in 1980 (up to 24 October). Since then, all illegal immigrants, both those arrested on entry and those who have evaded the security forces at the border but have been subsequently arrested, have been repatriated to China. The arrest and repatriation figures for the period after the ending of the "Touch base" policy are:

	Border Arrest	*Evaders Arrested*
1981	7,530	1,690
1982	8,676	2,484
1983	4,671	2,933
1984	9,653	3,090
1985 (January to October)	9,776	2,627

ENVIRONMENT

Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of Samaritans of Tyneside v. the Newcastle Upon Tyne City Council on 17 July, he will undertake a review of section 2 subsections 1 and 2 *(d)* of the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978.

Mrs. Rumbold: There does not appear to be any justification in this Court of Appeal decision for departing from the general principles of the 1978 Act and extending disabled rate relief beyond institutions caring predominantly for the disabled. I understand that the Samaritans of Tyneside already receive the minimum 50 per cent. rating relief on properties used for charitable purposes.

Land Registers

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire dated 9 August on the subject of land registers.

Sir George Young: In my reply of 12 September to my hon. Friend I undertook to let him know the decisions reached in respect of certain parcels of land where my right hon. Friend had given notice of his proposal to direct the disposal of the land. I am now able to do so.

On 25 June 1985, notices were given under section 99 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to the owners of 50 land register sites giving them notice of the Secretary of State's proposals to direct them to take steps to dispose of their land. The owners had 42 days to make representations as to why they should not be so directed or as to the proposed contents of the directions. The 42-day period ended on 6 August 1985. Representations were received from owners of all 50 sites.

After carefully considering the representations made to him, my right hon. Friend has today made directions under section 98 of the 1980 Act requiring the owners of 21 of the original 50 sites to take steps to dispose of their interest in the land. A list of the 21 sites, which amount to about 56·3 hectares of land, has been placed in the Library of the house.

In the case of a further 21 sites, totalling some 85 hectares, he has decided not to make directions at the moment because he is satisfied that the owners have either disposed of the site, brought it back into use or are about to do so, in many cases as a result of the section 99 notice. In the cases of the remaining eight sites, totalling some 15·7 hectares, he has decided not to direct the disposal of the land in accordance with the original proposed directions but is considering fresh directions. He has today given notice under section 99 of the 1980 Act of his revised proposed directions in respect of three of these totalling 12·5 hectares. These sites are at Wythenshawe road in Manchester, Newmarket road, Ashton-under-Lyne and Hawthorne road, Denton.

The present exercise has proved successful. Of the 157 hectares subject to the 50 section 99 notices, 54 per cent. has already been or is being sold or brought into use; 36 per cent. is now the subject of directions under section 98 of the act; and my right hon. Friend is today giving notice of his intention to direct disposal of almost all the remainder.

In those cases where my right hon. Friend has decided not to make a direction for the moment, my Department will monitor progress and take action as appropriate. We are determined to maintain the momentum we have built up in bringing surplus land back into use and will be considering similar action on other sites, shortly.

English Industrial Estates

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the current programme of development at present being undertaken by English Industrial Estates on the Isle of Wight will be completed in full.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes. The programme concerned is funded by the Development Commission and is being pushed forward vigorously.

Dog Licensing

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of dog licences.

Mrs. Rumbold: This matter remains under consideration following consultation on possible changes to the licensing system. We will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to announce the 1985-86 housing investment programme allocations.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme allocations for 1985-86 were announced on 20 December 1984. My right hon. Friend will make an announcement very shortly about the total available for allocations in 1986-87, and intends to notify individual local authorities of their allocations in December.

Defective Housing

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on the allocation to local authorities of resources for the repair of defective properties in the light of the decision of the Divisional Court on 23 July in the case of Birmingham district council v. Wendy Kelly, Beryl Robinson and Travella Edmonds concerning health risks in council properties which have condensation.

Sir George Young: We are discussing with the local authority associations how best to distribute the resources available for allocation to local authorities for capital expenditure on housing in 1986-87. The allocations themselves, together with the principles followed in making them, will be announced in due course: they will take proper account of all relevant considerations.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the extra cash allocated to housing in 1986-87 following the autumn statement will be available, taking inflation into account, to increase the actual numbers of dwellings in serious disrepair which can be worked upon, compared with 1985-86.

Sir George Young: I shall be announcing very shortly the apportionment of the total public expenditure provision for housing in 1986-87 between local authorities, new towns and the Housing Corporation. It is [illegible] local authorities to determine how best to spend the resources available to them, but I expect greater priority to be given to renovation of local authority dwellings next year, in the light of the report of the Department's inquiry into the condition of local authority housing stock.

Housing Repairs (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has any plans to help local authorities deal with repairs to housing stock transferred from the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: On abolition, the housing capital allocation which would have been given to the GLC for renovating transferred stock in 1986-87 will be distributed to transferee authorities according to need. Housing capital receipts accruing to the London Residuary Body will be distributed to the boroughs pro rata to HIP allocations. The boroughs will be able to secure the services of GLC specialist staff, using, if they wish, the good offices of the London Residuary Body.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what existing developments will be displaced in relation to the construction of the Docklands light railway; and with what employment consequences.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Greater London Council (Abolition)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the responses received in support of his Department's proposals for future arrangements for the Greater London council's seaside and country homes.

Sir George Young: Thirty-seven district councils, three London boroughs and the ADC have responded in support of the Department's proposals.

Hammersmith Community Trust

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to give his decision on a section 93 grant to the Hammersmith Community Trust to carry out repairs to premises at 153 Hammond road and for the removal of asbestos, for which the Greater London council applied on 24th June.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has received no application for consent from the Greater London council to the carrying out of work at 153 Hammond road by the Hammersmith Community Trust or by any other party.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance he will be able to give local authorities towards the funding of voluntary organisations affected by abolition; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In order to stimulate local authority funding of voluntary bodies, the Government are making transitional grant available on £20 million a year worth of voluntary projects taken on by boroughs and districts from the GLC/MCCs.

There has been an encouraging response from local authorities, which justifies the Government's confidence that its measures to safeguard voluntary bodies after abolition will be effective. Provisional bids have been made by all but one of the authorities concerned. This demonstrates their willingness to take on these increased responsibilities, aided by the substantial support which the transitional grant scheme will provide.

We are writing today to the authorities in response to the initial bids setting out in more detail how the allocations of transitional grant will be made. We wish to direct the grants towards those local projects which make the most effective contribution towards tackling the social needs of the areas concerned. Political campaigning groups, police monitoring groups, and groups which do not benefit local people will not get support.

I am placing a copy of the letter in the Library.

Double Glazing (Fire Safety)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice his Department issues concerning safety in domestic properties in the case of fire where double glazing is involved.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I have been asked to reply.

Home Office fire safety publicity includes general advice on the need to plan escape routes in case of fire in the home. Specific advice on the possible use of windows as a means of escape is contained in material issued by the glazing trade and this subject has also been publicised by other organisations.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from safety organisations concerning the dangers arising from fire in double-glazed properties.

Sir George Young: During the consultations over the new building regulations, representations were received from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents that the regulations should require double-glazed windows to be openable to provide a means of escape in the event of fire.

In 1983 Government Departments carried out a review of policies on glazing and fire safety. Little evidence emerged then, or has done since the Home Office followed up the review in 1984, that fixed glazing is a significant factor in causing or contributing to fatal casualties. In the light of the review, the Government decided that an extension of the building regulations would not be justified.

However, the Government attach a high priority to fire safety in the home and we regularly review the requirements of the building regulations to ensure that essential fire safety standards are maintained.

Thames Water Authority

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission's circular No. 9 issued on 11 October, he will issue a direction to the Thames water authority further to consider designating staff of the Greater London council working in areas for which the Thames water authority will become responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No.

Leeds and Liverpool Canal Corridor

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to reach a decision on the joint application to his Department for a submission for grant aid under the European regional development fund for a study into the social and economic feasibility of a scheme to revitalise the Leeds and Liverpool canal corridor.

Mr. Tracey: The application for European regional development fund grant aid was received in my Department on 11 November. Internal consultations are already under way and officials expect to be in a position to discuss the proposals with Lancashire county council shortly.

Local Government Reform (Retirement Arrangements)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the responses received to his Department's proposals in the consultation paper arising from the Local Government Act 1985, regarding early retirement arrangements for staff of the Greater London council and metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Tracey: My Department received responses from the TUC, the London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission, the AMA, the ACC, the ADC, and some 19 individual local authorities. A variety of responses were also received from other interested organisations and individuals.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Dentists

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the figures for the amounts scheduled per dentist in the General Dental Services of the National Health Service for the months April to September 1985 inclusive; and what are the comparable figures for the equivalent months from 1981 to 1984 inclusive.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is not available on a monthly basis. The average amounts scheduled per dentist* in England and Wales for the quarters April to June and June to September in each of the years 1981 to 1985 are as follows:

	April to June £	*July to September* £
1981	9,527	8,998
1982	10,643	9,968
1983	10,714	10,537
1984	11,328	11,227
1985	11,556	11,941

* Excluding dentists who did not work in the GDS for the whole year (ending in September), and a small number in other groups.

Opticians

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) in the light of the recent judgment in the High Court concerning the clawback of alleged excess profits by opticians, whether he will consider withdrawing the clawback of a similar nature imposed on dentists;

(2) what are the figures for the amounts of money withheld from dentists, under the clawback arrangements, during the following years: 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85; and whether he will express these figures both as total amounts and amounts per individual general dental practitioner.

Mr. Hayhoe: No adjustments of the kind imposed on opticians have been imposed on dentists. The system of remuneration of general dental practitioners includes an arrangement whereby the income paid in one year is adjusted in agreement with the profession, on the basis of data on actual income supplied by the Inland Revenue, to take account of any under or over payments in previous years. This arrangement has proved acceptable to the independent Doctors and Dentists Review Body.

The adjustments made in the years 1979-80 to 1984-85 and agreed by the profession are as follows (a negative sign indicating an amount recovered from dentists).

	Total (England) £ million	*Amount per general dental practitioner**
1979-80	0	0
1980-81	0	0
1981-82	−5·4	−440
1982-83	−2·5	−197
1983-84	−1·2	−88
1984-85	0	0

* excluding dentists who did not work in the GDS for the whole year and a small number in other groups.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the total cost of *(a)* paying a 7 per cent. increase in invalidity benefit to all invalidity pensioners and *(b)* paying a 7 per cent. increase to all other social security beneficiaries, broken down by category.

Mr. Major: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the cost of this month's uprating, when the great majority of benefits will increase by 7 per cent. Invalidity benefit will, however, increase by 11·8 per cent. because of the restoration of the 5 per cent. abatement introduced in 1980.

The total net cost of this uprating of invalidity benefit is about £170 million in a full year. The figure takes account of the restoration of the abatement, the introduction by the Social Security Act 1985 of an offset between invalidity allowance and the additional component, and the effect on supplementary benefit entitlement.

The full year net costs of uprating other main benefits are:

Benefit	*Cost £ million*
Retirement pension	1,120
Widows' benefits	55
Unemployment benefit	115
Sickness benefit	20
Invalid care allowance	1
Attendance allowance	45
Severe disablement allowance	20
Mobility allowance	30
Industrial injuries benefits	30
War pensions	35
Maternity allowance	15
Child benefit*	100
One parent benefit	10
Family income supplement*	35
Supplementary benefits*	230
Housing benefit*	—

Notes:
1. All figures are rounded
2. Benefits marked * increase by an amount different from seven per cent.
3. The cost of increasing supplementary benefit and housing benefit is reduced by the relatively higher uprating of other benefits.

The total cost of the uprating is about £2,050 million.

Health Visitors

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what national provisions exist for providing standardised information on a continuing basis to health visitors throughout the United Kingdom to ensure a consistent approach between health authorities and to disseminate models of good practice.

Mr. Hayhoe: A package of performance indicators has been sent to health authorities to help local management identify aspects of service performance which warrant investigation and to offer them pointers to appropriate action for improving services. Indicators particularly relevant to health visitors are:

—numbers of children seen in a year
—vaccination and immunisation rates
—number of health visitors visits per 1,000 population
—number of over 65s seen by health visitors

This material is published annually and was last circulated to health authorities in July 1985.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to issue any guidance during the current winter on the interpretation of regulation 26 of the supplementary benefit regulations governing single payments due to exceptionally severe weather; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to increase the effectiveness and fairness of the operation of the supplementary benefit single payment for exceptionally severe weather, particularly so far as claims by eligible elderly people in the coming winter are concerned.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member and my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 11 November at columns 95-96.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total numbers of people who claimed cold weather payments in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 to date.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available on the total numbers of people who have claimed supplementary benefit single payments for extra fuel used as a result of periods of exceptionally severe weather. The number of payments made in recent years is as follows:

Year	*Approximate number of payments (thousands)*
1981	—
1982	280
1983	—
1984	—
1985 (to date)	170

Figures are not available for 1979 or 1980.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much of health service expenditure as an absolute figure and as a percentage of total National Health Service expenditure for each of the past 10 years was spent on *(a)* elderly and geriatric services, *(b)* community services, *(c)* the mentally handicapped, *(d)* the mentally ill, *(e)* obstetric services and *(f)* acute hospital services.

Mr. Hayhoe: The requested breakdown by patient group is available only for hospital and community health

services expenditure which accounts for some 70 per cent. of total National Health Service expenditure. The table shows estimated gross current expenditure by health authorities, in cash and as a percentage of total hospital and community health services expenditure, on the main client groups each year between 1975-76 and 1983-84, the latest year for which these estimates are available. Comparable figures prior to 1975-76 are not available.

These estimates of health authorities' spending are valid for monitoring broad trends, but not for making close comparisons between individual programmes. They are derived from the Department's programme budget analyses which have been provided to the Social Services Committee each year since 1980 and have been published in minutes of evidence associated with the Committee's reports. The latest analysis at constant prices, together with notes of caution on the limits of its accuracy, are given in the Committee's Sixth Report (HC 339) which was published in June of this year.

Hospital and Community Health Services expenditure (£ million cash) England

	1975-76	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Geriatric services*	269	311	356	410	489	649	714	763	804
(percentage of total)	(8·7)	(8·9)	(9·1)	(9·3)	(9·2)	(9·5)	(9·4)	(9·4)	(9·4)
Community services	260	294	329	370	449	598	665	728	780
(percentage of total)	(8·4)	(8·4)	(8·4)	(8·4)	(8·5)	(8·7)	(8·8)	(9·0)	(9·1)
Services for mentally handicapped people	162	181	205	229	275	355	389	419	437
(percentage of total)	(5·3)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·1)	(5·2)	(5·1)
Services for mentally ill people†	354	389	444	490	593	775	860	916	965
(percentage of total)	(11·5)	(11·1)	(11·3)	(11·1)	(11·2)	(11·3)	(11·3)	(11·3)	(11·3)
Obstetric services	167	188	207	224	273	353	392	427	435
(percentage of total)	(5·4)	(5·3)	(5·3)	(5·1)	(5·1)	(5·2)	(5·2)	(5·3)	(5·1)
Acute hospital services	1,455	1,653	1,833	2,052	2,459	3,163	3,505	3,745	3,958
(percentage of total)	(47·2)	(47·1)	(46·7)	(46·6)	(46·3)	(46·2)	(46·2)	(46·3)	(46·2)
Other services	414	495	548	631	772	958	1,057	1,087	1,182
(percentage of total)	(13·4)	(14·1)	(14·0)	(14·3)	(14·5)	(14·0)	(13·9)	(13·4)	(13·8)
Total Hospital and community health services‡ (excluding joint finance)	3,081	3,511	3,923	4,406	5,310	6,849	7,582	8,085	8,561

* Including expenditure on non-psychiatric day patients.
† Including expenditure on psychiatric day patients.
‡ As given in health authorities summari[illegible] accounts.
‖ Provisional.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to the joint policy statement on National Health Service expenditure sent to him by the British Medical Association, the Institute of Health Service Administrators and the Royal College of Nursing; what response he is making; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Computer Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which personal data files on *(a)* the unemployment benefit computer system at Reading and *(b)* his Department's computer system at Newcastle have reference to or are indexes to manual files; and whether he will describe the broad categories or details that can be found on those manual files.

Mr. Major: The unemployment benefit computer systems at Reading and Livingstone and the computer systems in Newcastle central office both have reference to supporting clerically held records containing, for example, evidence of entitlement to benefit. Where taxable benefits are concerned there may also be references to income tax records held by the Inland Revenue, some of which are clerical. The pensions, national insurance contributions and child benefit systems in Newcastle central office include references which could lead to other files held in DHSS central offices and local offices relating to entitlement to various social security benefits. Some personal data files in these systems may also include references to files held outside the Department, such as bank or building society accounts or occupational pensions schemes, but the details contained in those files are not available to the Department.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to amend the rule relating to those employed on seasonal work who are currently barred from drawing unemployment benefit after three consecutive years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: A seasonal worker may receive unemployment benefit during his off-season if he can show that he has had, or can reasonably expect to obtain, a substantial amount of employment during that off-season. This condition is designed to ensure that unemployment benefit is not paid to those seasonal workers who are not in the employment field during their off-seasons. As there is no practical way of distinguishing between the voluntary and involuntary seasonal worker, we have no plans to amend these rules.

Operation Seagull

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the total number of non-premium time hours worked by, and the total cost of overtime payments to, North-western regional health authority ambulance personnel at, or travelling to and from Blackpool, during the period 7 to 11 October;

(2) what was the total cost to the North-western regional health authority of Operation Seagull, mounted at Blackpool during the period 7 to 11 October;

(3) how many vehicles belonging to A, B and C divisions, respectively, of the North-western regional health authority ambulance service were on deployment and based at Blackpool from 7 to 11 October; how many ambulances remained on station at Salford, Atherton, Wigan and Bolton during that period; how many ambulance service support vehicles were sent to Blackpool on a daily basis during that period; and what were the total numbers of hours paid, hours worked and rest days worked by ambulance personnel from the Greater Manchester ambulance service engaged in Operation Seagull during that period.

Mr. Whitney: We do not hold this information centrally. I understand the hon. Member may already have had answers to some of these questions from the chairman of the North Western regional health authority, who may also be able to answer the remaining points.

Hospital Beds (Grimsby)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the figures for the number of hospital beds in Great Grimsby at the latest available date and for May 1979.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available centrally in precisely the form requested. During 1984, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, the average daily number of available beds in National Health Service hospitals in Grimsby District Health Authority was 800. The corresponding figure for 1979 was 797.

Hypothermia (Grimsby)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many deaths from hypothermia there have been in the last five years in Great Grimsby.

Mr. Whitney: There have been two deaths registered between 1 January 1981 and 1 November 1985 with a mention of hypothermia on the death certificate to residents of Great Grimsby, one female in 1982 and one male in 1983.

Woolwich Office

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what computer facilities are available at his Department's Woolwich office.

Mr. Major: In accordance with the Department's operational strategy seven British Telecom microcomputer systems have been installed to deal with supplementary benefit work and will be in operation shortly. Datalink equipment allowing national insurance information to be obtained has been in use for several years.

Child Benefit

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost of each 1 per cent. increase in child benefit.

Mr. Newton: The net cost of a 1 per cent. increase in child benefit would be about £35 million in a full year.

Family Income Supplement

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many extra families he expects will receive family income supplement as a result of the changes to the scheme, over and above indexation, that will be implemented this November.

Mr. Newton: About 10,000.

Regional Health Authorities (Court Settlements)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of out of court settlements, and the amounts paid, by each regional health authority for claims against each authority in each of the last four financial years for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information held centrally does not distinguish between out of court settlements and those resulting from court decisions. The table shows the number of cases in which compensation payments were made by the health authorities in each region as a result of court decisions, legal advice or out of court settlements, and the total of the payments, as recorded in authorities' annual accounts.

Region	*1981-82*		*1982-83*		*1983-84*		*1984-85**	
	Number of cases	*Payments £*	*Number of cases*	*Payments £*	*Number of cases*	*Payments £*	*Number of cases*	*Payments £*
Northern	117	119,431	115	184,381	79	188,609	110	141,399
Yorkshire	171	103,893	198	143,624	245	184,038	262	322,560
Trent	183	203,477	226	204,167	254	313,289	288	318,972
East Anglian	73	133,325	93	105,464	119	182,596	145	222,633
North West Thames	125	221,005	106	216,922	97	164,216	113	534,736
North East Thames	310	308,545	339	621,980	294	501,903	294	766,875
South East Thames	234	156,217	240	277,666	245	247,652	227	469,300
South West Thames	388	842,094	328	216,962	463	708,190	365	320,771
Wessex	118	124,796	152	122,498	219	692,553	216	181,534
Oxford	38	50,774	80	32,353	65	70,426	77	133,937
South Western	132	187,423	186	177,383	129	328,785	115	305,779
West Midlands	293	312,521	341	661,127	329	242,007	367	371,489
Mersey	175	128,885	198	125,638	233	392,275	273	266,350
North Western	424	539,395	372	431,446	487	563,997	518	545,479
Total	2,781	3,432,781	2,974	3,521,611	3,258	4,780,536	3,370	4,901,814

Region	1981-82		1982-83		1983-84		1984-85*	
	Number of cases	Payments £	Number of cases	Payments £	Number of cases	Payments £	Number of cases	Payments £
Boards of governors SHAs	10	4,582	16	47,408	8	58,639	23	156,776
Grand total	2,791	3,437,363	2,990	3,569,019	3,266	4,839,175	3,393	5,058,590

* Provisional figures.

McColl Report

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the report of the McColl working party on artificial limbs and appliances is expected to be published.

Mr. Newton: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) on 13 November at columns *207-8*.

Salmonella Deaths (Wakefield)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the report of the inquiry into the salmonella deaths at Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on 11 November at columns *95-6*.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, on the latest available figures, if he will provide the waiting lists for *(a)* urgent and *(b)* non-urgent cases in (i) Leeds eastern district health authority and (ii) Leeds western district health authority; and if he will give the comparable figures for 1984.

Mr. Whitney: The requested information is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting lists for admission to NHS hospitals at 31 March

District Health Authority	Urgent cases		Non-urgent cases	
	1984	1985	1984	1985
Leeds Eastern	628	531	4,620	4,739
Leeds Western	450	667	3,971	3,665

Mrs. Myra Mable Fairclough

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to ensure that the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health authority's report and inquiry into the death of Mrs. Myra Mable Fairclough at St. Mary's hospital, Portsmouth, is made public.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 12 November at columns *161-62*.

Surgical Operations (Resources)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what resources he proposes to allocate during the next three years towards increasing hip replacement operations, renal services and coronary artery surgery facilities; and what is the current level of demand from senior citizens for each of the above treatments.

Mr. Hayhoe: Spending in the hospital and community health services is planned to increase by £650 million in 1986-87. Further increases of £470 million and £440 million are planned for 1987-88 and 1988-89 respectively. Health authorities will also have available their growing cost improvement programmes. It is for authorities to decide upon the allocation of resources to individual services from within the totals available to them. But, the three procedures listed are identified as key priorities for further development and I expect authorities to plan accordingly. Information on the levels of demand for specific procedures or by age group is not available centrally.

Ambulancemen

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the average weekly earnings of ambulancemen each year since 1979; and how many ambulancemen employed in the west midlands region have enrolled for the 12-month life-saving techniques courses arranged by the Government.

Mr. Whitney: Estimates, derived from various sources for each year except 1982, of average gross weekly earnings (excluding London allowance) of all ambulancemen are as follows:

	£
June 1979	93.92
June 1980	129.95
June 1981	141.56
June 1983	153.55
June 1984	160.46
June 1985	*162.08

* Excluding the 1985-86 settlement which is still the subject of negotiations.

The courses are not arranged by the Government and the information relating to the west midlands region is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the west midlands regional health authority who may be able to provide the information requested.

Food Additives

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the policy on the alleged health risks associated with diethylene glycol in sweets, meat pies, pasties, sausage rolls, cakes and puddings.

Mr. Whitney: I am advised that it is unlikely that adverse health effects have occurred as a result of exposure to diethylene glycol (DEG) and monoethylene glycol (MEG) in food, arising from the use over many years of regenerated cellulose film (RCF), though the possibility that untoward effects might have occurred in some individuals cannot be ruled out. I am satisfied that there is no need at the present time to take action to remove from retail sale food wrapped in RCF. However, it is necessary

for steps to be taken to reduce levels of DEG and MEG migrating into food, and in his reply to the hon. Member on 21 November, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will indicate the action being taken. We shall continue to keep in close touch on this matter.

Hospital and Community Health Services

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the real terms increase in revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services since 1982; what percentage of that increase has been used to meet the costs of the National Health Service drugs bill, the financing of pay awards and costs of repairs and maintenance; to what extent the increase takes into account demographic changes; and what investments he proposes to inject into the hospital and community health budget during the next three years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Revenue expenditure on hospital and community health services increased 2·4 per cent. in economic cost terms in the two years from 1982-83 to 1984-85. The cash allocations for each year included an amount over and above forecast general inflation in recognition of the costs of demographic change. Health authorities are expected to meet pay and price increases, to develop services and to invest as necessary in repairs and maintenance from within the total resources available to them, including both their cash allocations and resources released from efficiency savings and cost improvement programmes. It is not, therefore, possible to identify separately the proportion of the cash interest allocated each year which has been spent on specific items. As regards hospital and community health services funding over the next three years, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) on 12 November at columns *162-63*.

Social Fund

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines he intends to issue in respect of availability of assistance with furniture, house repairs, fuel disconnection and reconnection charges, costs caused by sickness or visits to a child in care and home insulation within the framework of the social fund.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) on 3 July at columns *177-78*.

Mental Patients

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients have been detained under the Mental Health Act 1983; how many complaints were submitted to the Mental Health Act Commission about treatment of mental patients; and what findings arose from those complaints which were subsequently investigated.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Numbers of compulsory admissions are collected centrally by calendar year. In the course of the year 1984, there were a total of 16,019 compulsory admissions to mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England under the terms of the Mental Health Act 1983, and on 31 December 1984, 5,892 patients were detained under the Act. The yearly figure of 16,019 includes some patients admitted more than once.

The Mental Health Act 1983 came into effect on 30 September 1983. Information about compulsory admissions between that date and the end of 1983 is not readily available but I will let the hon. Member have it as soon as it is available.

On the question of complaints made to the Mental Health Act Commission, I refer the hon. Member to section 10 and appendix 2 of the commission's first biennial report (House of Commons paper 586) which was laid before the House on 22 October 1985.

Finsbury Park and Archway (Claimants)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the numbers of claimants at the Finsbury Park and Archway offices of his Department in receipt of *(a)* supplementary benefit and *(b)* single payments for furniture in September of each year since 1979.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of claimants receiving supplementary benefit from the Department's offices at Finsbury Park and Archway on 30 July 1985 —the latest available figures—and at comparative dates in each of the preceding five years. Figures for 1979 are not now available.

	Finsbury Park	*Archway (Highgate)*
1980	10,143	11,775
1981	12,859	13,981
1982	15,215	16,679
1983	15,929	16,276
1984	17,507	17,072
1985	18,023	18,332

Source 100 per cent. count of cases in action.

Information is not available from which reliable estimates could be made of the number of single payments made for furniture by individual offices for any period. Statistics are collected monthly on the total number of all single payments made by each office and although later information for these offices is available, for comparison purposes details of awards of all single payments for the 4 week period ending 30 July 1985 and of the same periods in the preceding five years are given as follows:

	Finsbury Park	*Archway (Highgate)*
1980	245	242
1981	175	178
1982	224	167
1983	342	236
1984	324	348
1985	723	481

Figures for 1979 are not now available.

Note: Since April 1984 the basis of counting single payment awards has changed. Now unsuccessful claims and separate payments made simultaneously to the same beneficiary but under different single payment regulations are also included.

Free Prescribing

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of free prescribing for patients suffering from specified medical conditions which call for continuous life-long medication.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to include Dariers disease, multiple sclerosis and cystic fibrosis on the list of life-long illnesses which are eligible for free medication.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no plans at present to do so.

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has made any estimate of the cost of extending exemption from prescription charges to sufferers of Dariers disease; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No, but, since I understand the number of people suffering from this rare, hereditary disease is small, the cost would not be great. However, there are many other groups of people who believe that they should be exempt from prescription charges and any extension of the present arrangements to all these groups would be costly.

Prepayment Certificates

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to reduce the cost of prepayment certificates for those people suffering from life-long illnesses not included on the exemption list.

Mr. Hayhoe: No, I have no plans to do so.

Doctors, Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers of doctors, nurses and midwives in Hampshire for each of the years from 1979 to the present.

Mr. Hayhoe: Reliable, consistent data are not available in the form requested for hospital staff. These figures are recorded by health authority areas, whose boundaries are not in this instance wholly contiguous with those of the local authority.

The figures for general medical practitioners are as follows:

Number of Unrestricted Principals in Hampshire Family Practitioner Committee

	Number
1979	678
1980	694
1981	726
1982	747
1983	763
1984	786

Anglers (Cancer)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the committee on carcinogenicity at its meeting on 29 October considered the relationship between the use of chrysoidine dye and bladder cancer in anglers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Yes. The committee on carcinogenicity considered the report of a study on chrysoidine dye and urothelial cancer published in *The Lancet* on 29 June together with further information provided by the authors.

The committee confirmed that the study demonstrated an association between coarse fishing and urothelial cancer, but the association was with coarse fishing overall rather than with any specific factor connected with coarse fishing, and the explanation for the association was not clear. A serious problem with interpreting the study arose from the lack of data on the quantity of tobacco smoked by patients in the study. Since cigarette smoking is known to be a risk-factor for bladder cancer it is possible that the increased risk for urothelial cancer noted in anglers and in certain subgroups of anglers may be a result of greater tobacco usage in these groups rather than due to the use of dyes. It was also noted that the increase in risk was relatively small, and only just reached the level of statistical significance.

The committee reaffirmed its advice that it would be prudent for anglers who wanted to use chrysoidine to avoid contact through the skin (eg by using suitable protective gloves) or mouth with this dye, either when preparing dyed maggots or when using such maggots to bait hooks.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will be making new appointments to regional health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The term of office of half the current members of regional health authorities ends on 30 September 1986, and in accordance with the National Health Service Act 1977 we are seeking nominations for new members. If hon. Members wish to recommend any individuals for membership I invite them to write to me by 19 December 1985. Re-appointments and changes will be announced in due course.

Hospitals (Wartime Measures)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information is given to his Department's civil defence planners about the consequences for managing hospitals in times of war of the requirements of the joint United Kingdom/United States logistic plan for hospitals to give priority to United States military casualties.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. 96]: Existing guidance on the management of hospitals in time of war is contained in Home Defence circular 77/1. This does not include reference to the United States/United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement.

It is hoped to promulgate new guidance soon and NHS planners are amongst those recently consulted on a revised draft.

The United States/United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement does not require priority to be given to US military casualties. The priority given to all casualties will be based on medical opinion at the time.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hospitals will be required to discharge their patients in order to receive United States military

casualties if the current United States/United Kingdom lines of communication agreement is implemented in wartime.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. 96]: In a period of transition to war health authorities, if so directed, will be required to curtail admission of all but emergency cases and will arrange for patients whose retention is not medically essential to be sent home. The purpose of this will be to free hospitals to deal with civilian and military casualties. The latter may include US Service personnel.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the additional cost likely to be incurred by the National Health Service if Crown immunity were abolished.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985]: No estimate has been made and I regret that detailed information on which to base an estimate is not available.

Thames Regional Health Authorities (Treatment Facilities)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what facilities have been developed in the four Thames regions to treat the following groups of patients; drug misusers, the elderly, those suffering from mental illness and the mentally handicapped since 1979.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985]: This information is not held centrally, since the development of local facilities for the client groups to which my hon. Friend refers are a matter for the four regional health authorities and 58 district health authorities concerned. My hon. Friend may, therefore, find it helpful to contact the regional chairmen about the current position. In relation to services for drug misusers, our report "Drug Misuse: Prevalence and Service Provision" a copy of which is held in the Library, may also prove a useful source.

Water

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to issue advice to health authorities on the effects of acidification of waters on the aluminium content of potable supplies.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985]: No advice is necessary because the concentrations of aluminium in potable water are not known to present a public health problem. It is understood that water undertakers monitor the aluminium content of water.

Liver Transplants

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people died because of liver failure in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will estimate the proportion who could have been saved had suitable liver and transplant facilities been available.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. *202-4*]: It is not possible to estimate with any degree of accuracy how many people die because of liver failure each year. A working party at the Royal College of Surgeons has provisionally estimated the need for liver transplantation in England at 120 operations annually, but it will be revising this figure in about a year's time.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what change there has been in the resources devoted to liver transplant work in the National Health Service over the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply* 13 November 1985 c. *202-4*]: It is estimated that £1,452,000 was spent on liver transplantations in 1984-85. The funds allocated under the supra regional arrangements for 1985-86 total £2,336,000 and should enable about 95 operations to be performed. Both numbers are at 1985-86 cost levels.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are on the waiting list for liver transplants.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. *202-4*]: Waiting lists for liver transplants are maintained by the hospitals concerned and information is not collected centrally.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to encourage general practitioners to refer patients with serious liver complaints to transplant centres.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. *202-4*]: No. The referral of patients is a matter for the doctors concerned. I am, however, informed that a surgeon would be most unlikely to accept for liver transplantation a patient who had not been seen by a consultant hepatologist.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many liver transplant operations were carried out in *(a)* National Health Service hospitals and *(b)* private hospitals in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. *202-4*]: National figures for liver transplant operations were not collected before 1983. Twenty such operations were performed in National Health Service hospitals in 1983 and 49 in 1984. Information on operations performed in private hospitals is not collected centrally, but it is not thought that any were performed before 1 April 1985.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the factors that limit the expansion of liver transplant facilities in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 November 1985, c. *202-4*]: Liver transplantation is an increasingly successful procedure, but even though the cost of each operation appears to be falling as the number of operations performed increases, it is still very expensive and additional funds for expansion can only be found at the expense of other aspects of health service provision. There is at present no indication that suitable donor livers for adult patients are in short supply, though finding suitable donor livers for paediatric patients can be a problem in some cases. Liver transplantation was designated as a

supra regional service from 1 April 1984, and my right hon. Friend's intention is that the funds allocated under the supra regional arrangements should be increased as the availability of resources allows; he will be receiving advice on how this might best be managed from the supra regional services advisory group.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 November 1985

HOME DEPARTMENT

Drunkenness

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the outcome of experimental schemes designed to divert drunkenness offenders from the courts; what further plans he has for such schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Successive Governments have sought ways of relieving the criminal justice system of the burden of dealing with drunkenness offenders, and doing so in ways which might lead to rehabilitation rather than punishment. The most promising options in the last decade, detoxification centres and wet shelters, have both received Government support on an experimental basis. An evaluation published earlier this year of two detoxification centres set up in 1976 with the help of a DHSS grant suggested that, in practice, admissions involved fewer homeless habitual drunks than had been expected and few of those admitted needed or would respond to the sophisticated services provided. DHSS funding was withdrawn at the end of the experimental period, and the Home Office grant to the Leeds detoxification centre will not continue beyond the end of the current financial year.

In 1981 an experimental overnight shelter was set up in Birmingham with financial support from the Home Office with the aim of providing a simple sobering-up service for drunkenness offenders outside the criminal justice system. Evaluation of this project showed that, while it had had some success in reducing prosecutions for drunkenness, it was usually under-occupied and had had little success in referring its clients to other agencies for longer term help. Any financial savings to the police and the courts have been difficult to identify separately. Costs have been higher than had been expected, in part because of under-use. The Government doubt whether overnight shelters are likely to prove a cost-effective means of dealing with drunkenness offenders outside the criminal justice system. Government funding was made available to enable the experiment to go ahead and will cease at the end of the current financial year.

The Government remain committed to the policy of diverting drunkenness offenders from the criminal justice system. They are encouraged by the development of police cautioning schemes under which offenders are arrested, kept in police cells until they have sobered up and then cautioned, rather than prosecuted. It is, of course, for chief officers of police to decide whether they wish to adopt such cautioning schemes, but the Government take the view that they have considerable potential for diverting drunkenness offenders from the courts.

Outside the criminal justice system, the Government will continue to provide a range of advice, treatment and rehabilitation services for those with drinking problems, either directly or in conjunction with grant-aided voluntary organisations. The emphasis in future is expected to be on community based services involving statutory and voluntary bodies, for all problem drinkers, and the health and social needs of drunkenness offenders should be seen in this context.

BBC (Security Vetting)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the vetting of British Broadcasting Corporation staff by the security services.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government believe (as have successive Governments over a long period) that it is in the national interest for the BBC to apply certain necessary security procedures. The Government welcome the review of these procedures recently undertaken by the director general of the BBC, which has led to a clarification of the criteria for their application and ensured that the number of posts affected by them is kept to the necessary minimum. As the BBC has made clear, it alone decides whom to appoint to any post within the corporation, and no external agency has a right of veto on the appointment or promotion of any member of staff.

Bailiff (Powers of Arrest)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance he has given to water authorities as to the implications of the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act for the powers of arrest of bailiffs employed by water authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office has responded to individual requests for information on the implications of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 for the powers of arrest of bailiffs employed by water authorities. Section 26 of th 1984 Act repeals (subject to certain specified exceptions) all existing statutory powers of arrest without warrant of constables, but it will not affect the power of water bailiffs to arrest under section 34 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries Act 1975. Additionally, in the general enforcement of the 1975 Act, water bailiffs will be able to exercise the general arrest powers of a constable contained in section 25 of the 1984 Act, where any of the arrest criteria set out in that section are satisfied.

Section 67(9) of the 1984 Act requires persons charged with the duty of investigating offences to have regard to any relevant provisions of the codes of practice which we may issue under section 66. It will be a matter for such persons to decide in their own particular circumstances the extent to which the provisions of such codes may be applicable to the execution of their duties.

Immigration Officers

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from unions representing immigration officers about the organisation and management of their work.

Mr. Waddington: I have received representations personally from the national executive committee of the Immigration Service Union. It expressed concern at the increase in operational pressures which have been experienced during recent months, particularly at

Heathrow; the increase in the number of cases attracting representations from right hon. and hon. Members: and the adequacy of staffing levels. Officials of the Home Office have also had meetings with representatives both of the Immigration Service Union and of the immigration branch of the Society of Civil and Public Servants, which also represents some immigration officers. The organisation and management of the work of the immigration service was discussed at these meetings, when officials confirmed that Ministers were fully seized of the recent pressures on the control; and then explained the short-term measures being taken to provide some relief; for example, bringing forward the recruitment and posting of staff who will be required for Heathrow, terminal 4; the further planned financial provision for increased immigration service resources in future years; and a set of studies, on which the unions will be fully consulted, which are designed to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and value for money of present as against alternative ways of working. Further meetings between officials and representatives of the unions are planned.

Prisoners (Police Cells)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of prisoners being kept in police cells on 1 November attributable to the shortage of space in Her Majesty's prisons.

Mr. Mellor: On the night of 30 October-1 November there were 25 prisoners held in police cells. It is not possible to say from information held centrally precisely how many were held there because vacancies were not available in the right place at the right time and how many for logistical or other reasons.

Dr. Mark Patterson

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Dr. Mark Patterson, convicted in 1984 on a charge of conspiring to steal blood, is expected to be released from prison.

Mr. Mellor: It is not our general practice to make public the expected release dates of individual prisoners.

Civil Defence

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will plan for total civilian involvement in defence in the event of war.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Civilian involvement in the military defence of this country is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. The civil defence of this country concerns any organisation or person with a relevant responsibility or expertise, and present plannig takes account of this.

Gatwick Airport

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he will be making for additional police at Gatwick airport when the north terminal opens in 1987.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The policing of Gatwick airport is carried out by the Sussex police under a repayment arrangement with the British Airports Authority. It is the responsibility of the Sussex police authority to fix the authorised establishment of the force, subject to my right hon. Friend's approval. We have not received an application from the police authority for an increase in the police establishment in order to meet additional policing requirements at Gatwick airport in 1987.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those interested organisations from which he has had responses on the White Paper, "Scientific Procedures on Living Animals"; and when he expects to introduce legislation arising from it.

Mr. Mellor: The major organisations which have submitted comments on the White Papers Cmnd. 8883 and Cmnd. 9521 are as follows:

Universities

- Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
- Aberdeen University
- Birmingham University
- Cambridge University
- Glasgow University
- Liverpool University
- London University
  - Guy's Hospital Medical School
  - Hammersmith Hospital
  - Royal Postgraduate Medical School
  - Imperial College of Science and Technology
  - Middlesex Hospital Medical School
  - Royal Veterinary College
  - St. Mary's Hospital Medical School
- Newcastle upon Tyne University
- Surrey University

Scientific and Professional Societies

- Association of Veterinary Anaesthetists
- Biochemical Society
- Biological Council
- British Laboratory Animals Veterinary Association
- British Psychological Society
- British Toxicology Society
- British Veterinary Association
- Institute of Biology
- Laboratory Animals Science Association
- Mammal Society
- Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
- Physiological Society
- Research Defence Society
- Royal College of Pathologists
- Royal College of Surgeons of England
- Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
- Royal Society
- Society for Experimental Biology

Industry and Associated Organisations

- Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
- Association of Independent Contract Research Organisations
- Beecham Pharmaceuticals
- Boots Company plc
- British Agrochemicals Association
- British Industrial Biological Research Association
- Celltech Limited
- Chemical Industries Association
- Ciba-Geigy Pharmaceuticals Division
- Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association Ltd
- FBC Ltd
- Fisons plc
- Glaxo Group Research Limited
- Hazelton Laboratories (Europe) Ltd
- Hoechst UK Ltd
- ICI plc
- Miles Laboratories Ltd

Roche Ltd
Searle Research and Development
Wellcome Research Laboratories

Animal Welfare Organisations
Animal Aid
British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection
Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation
Crusade Against All Cruelty to Animals Ltd
Farm Animal Welfare Co-ordinating Executive
Flesh and Blood
Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments
National Anti-Vivisection Society Ltd
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society
Scottish Society for the Prevention of Vivisection
Universities Federation for Animal Welfare

Others
Agricultural Research Council
British Association for Cancer Research
General Synod of the Church of England
Medical Research Council
Medical Research Council (MRC Radiobiology Unit)
Natural Environment Research Council
Nature Conservancy Council
Pharmaceuticals Economic Development Committee
University Grants Committee

Legislation based on the White Paper proposals—the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill—was introduced in another place on 14 November 1985.

HM Prison, Brixton

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average population of Brixton prison in the week ended 2 November or in any other recent typical week.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985 the population of Brixton prison was about 990. Average weekly population figures are not recorded centrally.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space are available to prisoners in Brixton prison.

Mr. Mellor: Normally there are 39,461 sq ft of exercise space. Building work has resulted in the loss of 7,782 sq ft since October 1985, but this is expected to be reinstated by the end of this year.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the week ended 2 November or in any other recent typical week, the workshops in Brixton prison were open; what was the average number of prisoners employed; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of inmates in each class; how many individual prisoners attended at least one class during the week; and how much time on average each prisoner spent out of his cell during that week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November, the one workshop at Brixton prison was open for 20 hours and employed 20 remand prisoners who requested work. In addition, 100 convicted prisoners were employed on various domestic and maintenance duties. Forty-two classes were held during the week, with a total class hours of 78½ and the average number of prisoners attending each class was six. Fifty-five prisoners attended at least one class. It is not possible to calculate the average amount of time spent out of cells, since this covers many things besides work and education; for example, visits, medical treatment and applications to see the governor.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners who can be employed in workshops in Brixton prison in any one day.

Mr. Mellor: Twenty-five.

HM Prisons (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisons in Wales have the facility to hold, either on remand or on custodial sentence, women prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: None. Female remand prisoners from Wales would normally go to Pucklechurch or Risley; female sentenced prisoners go to Drake Hall or Styal.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there has been any recent change regarding the rights of prisoners at Her Majesty's prisons to receive local newspapers or press cuttings from their home area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. The conditions under which prisoners may receive personal newspapers are set out in prison standing order 4. The only restriction on the receipt of press cuttings enclosed with general correspondence are those imposed in respect of the content of all such correspondence under standing order 5. Both standing orders have been published and copies placed in the Library. Copies are available for reference by prisoners in the prison libraries.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated site value of Cardiff and Swansea prisons, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: Without knowing the purpose for which sites would be used, reliable valuation is not possible. Based on residential development, the estimated site values of Cardiff and Swansea prisons are approximately £1,250,000 and £450,000, respectively.

Mr. Miah (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to reply to the letter of 25 October reference Mr. Miah TN3/RLE/6261/85; how long Mr. Miah has been in custody and in what places; when he expects to come to a decision in this case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I have written to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Mohd Ashad Miah was detained at Harmondsworth from 15 to 24 October and at Ashford remand centre from 24 October to 16 November, when he made a voluntary departure.

My letter gives the reasons for the immigration officer's decision to refuse entry to Mr. Miah and my confirmation of that decision.

Mentally Ill and Handicapped Prisoners

Mr. Welsh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons suffering from mental

illness or from a mental handicap are at present in prison; and how these numbers compare with each of the 10 pre ceding years.

Mr. Mellor: The number of inmates who, in the opinion of prison medical officers, are suffering from mental disorder of a nature or degree which would satisfy th criteria in the Mental Health Act 1959 and 1983 was as follows. There was no census before 1977, and the latest available figures are for 31 March 1985.

	Number
30 June 1977	769
30 June 1978	581
30 June 1979	557
30 June 1980	457
30 June 1981	320
31 March 1982*	287
31 March 1983	319
31 March 1984	310
31 March 1985	269

* The census month was changed in this year.

Prison Officers (Assaults)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of assaults that have taken place on prison officers during the past five years, the number of restraints on male or female prisoners and the number of prisoners who lost days of remission during the same period.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information on assaults on prison officers and forfeitures of remission is summarised in the tables. Detailed breakdowns of offences and punishments are published annually in "Prison Statistics, England and Wales" (chapter 9 of the volume for 1984, Cmnd. 9622). Statistics on the use of restraints in the years 1981 to 84 are published in table 10.3 of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales 1984." Statistics for 1980 were published in table 10.6 of the volume for 1980 (Cmnd. 8372), but are less reliable and not comparable with those for subsequent years because a special exercise to check the corresponding figures for 1981 and 1982 revealed some errors, and corresponding checks cannot be made on the figures for earlier years.

Offences of violence to prison officers punished in prison department establishments in England and Wales by type of offence and year 1980-84*

Number of offences

Offence	†*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Gross personal violence to officer	18	45	126	111	111
Assault on officer	937	959	1,390	1,350	1,302
Total	955	1,004	1,516	1,461	1,413

* Including attempted offences.
† Numbers may have been lower during the POA industrial action.

Awards of forfeiture of remission to persons in prison department establishments in England and Wales by type of establishment† and year 1980-84*

‡*Number of awards*

Offence	‖*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Prison and remand centres	18,912	20,135	21,908	21,962	21,829
Youth custody centres	—	—	—	7,229	12,591
Detention Centres	4,014	4,043	4,265	3,278	2,837
Total	22,926	24,178	26,173	32,469	37,257

* Including prospective, suspended and activated suspended awards.
† Awards of forfeiture of remission were not applicable in borstals.
‡ Within a year, a prisoner may be awarded more than one punishment of forfeiture of remission as a result of separate charge proved.
‖ Numbers may have been lower during POA industrial action.

West Midlands Police

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what increase he proposes to authorise in the establishment of the West Midlands police in the next three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We expect to receive shortly the manpower plans of the new joint police authority for the west midlands.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Juries (Hotel Costs)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Attorney-General on how many nights in each of the past five years juries in criminal trials have been sent to a hotel whilst considering a verdict; and what has been the total cost in each of those years.

The Solicitor-General: The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of Nights*	*Hotel Cost* £
1981	51	22,461
1982	71	39,387
1983	90	45,209
1984	107	56,130
1985 (to date)	105	50,411

Social Security Appeals Tribunals

Mr. Barnett asked the Attorney-General how many persons under the age of 35 years have been appointed to chairmanships of social security appeals tribunals since 1979.

The Solicitor-General: Social security appeals tribunals were established on 23 April 1984 and since then no barrister or solicitor of the requisite professional standing under the age of 35 has been appointed in England and Wales to be a chairman. Three chairmen under 35 were appointed between 1979 and 23 April 1984 to the national insurance local tribunals or the supplementary benefit appeal tribunals which were abolished and replaced by the social security appeal tribunals.

Mr. Barnett asked the Attorney-General how many serving councillors in local authorities have been appointed to chairmanships of social security appeals tribunals since 1979.

The Solicitor-General: This information cannot be ascertained without disproportionate costs. There may have been a few such appointments.

Social Security Commissioners (Hearings)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Attorney-General how long a claimant would normally have to wait for an oral hearing before a social security commissioner if the commissioner ordered the oral hearing now in *(a)* London, *(b)* Cardiff, *(c)* Edinburgh and *(d)* Northern Ireland.

The Solicitor-General: The figures for London and Cardiff are:

(a) 10 weeks
(b) 3 weeks

I understand from my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland that the figures for Edinburgh and Northern Ireland are:

(c) 10 weeks
(d) 6 weeks

The figure at *(d)* is an average figure from a sample of recent cases at different locations.

WALES

District Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales at what date the meeting originally arranged between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Conwy, (Mr. Roberts) with the Gwynedd health authority, will be rearranged by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary with responsibility for health, the hon. member for Newport, West (Mr. Robinson).

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall be meeting the chairman of Gwynedd district health authority, together with the chairman of the other health authorities in Wales on Friday 22 November. Following that meeting, a mutually convenient date will be arranged early in 1986.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table including *(a)* the budgeted current and capital expenditure, respectively, and *(b)* the forecast actual, current and capital expenditure, respectively, of each of the new district health authorities in Wales, for the current year 1985-86.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The resources likely to be available to each district health authority in Wales in 1985-86 for current and capital expenditure is shown in the table.. The forecasts provided by individual health authorities suggests that their expenditure in 1985-86 will be contained within these allocated resources.

	Prospective Revenue Allocation £'000	*Prospective Capital Allocation £'000*
Clwyd	77·39	6·528
East Dyfed	48·41	1·614
Pembrokeshire	15·61	1·873
Gwent	94·15	4·187
Gwynedd	47·25	1·583
Mid Glamorgan	108·30	9·891
Powys	21·61	1·137
South Glamorgan	126·49	3·633
West Glamorgan	77·29	8·011

Note: The allocations take into account sums currently held in central reserves for specific developments. These will be released to the authorities when required. The capital allocations also include anticipated receipts from the sale of land and buildings which may or may not be realised this year.

Royal Aircraft Establishment, Aberporth

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to visit RAE Aberporth during 1985 to discuss the implications of the privatisation and contracting out of services with the superintendent of rangers and members of staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no such plans. I am, however, in close touch with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, following the Cavanagh review.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Lord Privy Seal how many individuals are currently working in the Palace of Westminster and immediately associated buildings; and how many of these are Members of the House of Commons, Peers, secretaries, research assistants, officers of either House and employees of either House.

Mr. Biffen: The information requested is as follows.

	Number
House of Lords	
Peers*	*937
Officers and Staff	272
Research Assistants	8
Lord Chancellor's Department	68
House of Commons	
Members	650
Officers and Staff	945
Private Secretaries	586
Research Assistants	186
Temporary Secretaries and research assistants	438

[*Note:* Excluding peers without writs and those on leave of absence. The daily average attendance of peers is 321. It is not possible to indicate which individual peers' secretaries work regularly in the building.]

In addition some 700 staff are employed by associated organisations (such as the Property Services Agency, the Metropolitan police and the Post Office) performing functions for or on behalf of the two Houses; and the number of journalists accredited to the Parliamentary Press Gallery is 318.

These figures do not include Civil Servants who spend a proportion of their time working in the Palace.

PRIME MINISTER

Channel Fixed Link

Mr. Hickmet asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement about the implications for the United Kingdom of the proposed construction of a fixed link across the Channel; and what effect she estimates the construction of such a link would have upon employment and the steel industry.

The Prime Minister: The four proposals for a Channel fixed link submitted by promoters in accordance with the Invitation to promoters are now being evaluated by a joint Anglo-French group of officials. Their evaluation will include an assessment of the impact of each scheme upon employment, not only in Kent but also throughout the economy generally. The Government will make a statement when their consideration of the alternative proposals is complete.

Quangos

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list the quangos presently operating.

The Prime Minister: A list of the non-departmental public bodies (commonly referred to as quangos) in existence on 1 April 1985 will be published early in December as "Public Bodies 1985". A copy will be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Service Men (Bomb Injuries)

Mr. Stott asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 14 November, *Official Report*, column 682, why she stated that it was for the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) to have contacted her office about her failure, first reported by the *Daily Mail* on 8 November, to reply to the letter sent to her last June by the mother of ex-Corporal David Timms, who was injured with the Royal Green Jackets in the bomb outrage of July 1982; and if she will make a further statement.

The Prime Minister: I have written to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) explaining that my office has no trace of having received Mrs. Timms' letter.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her oral reply, 14 November, *Official Report*, column 682, to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, what action she has now taken in relation to the needs of the soldiers injured in the bomb outrage in Regent's park in July 1982 further to the pledge given when she visited them in hospital; when she replied to the letter reported to have been sent to her last June by the mother of ex-Corporal David Timms; and if she will make a further statement.

The Prime Minister: I have written to the right hon. Gentleman.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

International Youth Year

88. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the Government's response to the International Youth Year 1985.

Mr. Dunn: The Government have responded to International Youth Year both directly—through funding for the four IYY co-ordinating committees — and through relevant programmes.

Speech Science

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has on the numbers of staff engaged in full or part-time teaching on courses leading to degrees in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy and their places of employment;

(2) what information he has as to the number of students, and their place of study, sitting for examinations for degrees in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy in 1983, 1984 and 1985 and the classification of honours awarded where appropriate;

(3) what information he has as to the numbers and location of courses at universities, polytechnics or other institution leading to degrees in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy.

Mr. Walden: Details of courses in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy and numbers of graduates are as follows:

	Institution	*Course*	*1983* *All first degree graduates*	*of which good honours graduates*
a	GB universities			
	University College, London	Speech sciences	46	16
	Manchester	Speech pathology and therapy	18	10
	Newcastle	Speech	8	4
	Reading	Linguistics and Language pathology	13	4
	Sheffield	Speech Science	14	5
b	England polytechnics			
	City of Birmingham	Speech pathology and therapy	*20	*7
	Leicester	Speech pathology and therapy†	—	—
	Leeds	Speech therapy†	—	—
	Manchester	Remedial speech therapy†	—	—
c	England other institutions			
	The Central school of speech and drama	Speech therapy†	—	—

Notes:
* 1984 graduates.
† There were no graduates from those institutions in 1984.

Information for university graduates in 1984 and all graduates in 1985 is not yet available.

From October 1985 the City university London, commenced a four-year first degree course in clinical communication studies. Information in respect of university higher degree courses is not available while in 1984 higher degree courses were offered in speech therapy at the city of Birmingham polytechnic and speech pathology and therapy at Leicester polytechnic.

The numbers of staff engaged in teaching courses leading to degrees in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy and their place of employment is not available.

Student Loans

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer, *Official Report*, 12 November, column *113*, on what grounds, and according to what assumptions, the possibility of replacing maintenance grants wholly or partly with loans was ruled out by the Government for the present time.

Mr. Walden: The possibility of replacing maintenance grants wholly or partly with loans has been ruled out at the present time on economic grounds.

Swann Report

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made towards implementing the recommendations of the Swann report, with special reference to the employment of teachers from the ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) on 18 November at column *1*.

Student Grants

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy that student grants should not be paid to those who take action to prevent the freedom of speech being exercised.

Mr. Walden: The Government are totally committed to the cause of preserving freedom of speech at institutions of higher education. Action against students who seek to prevent it is a matter for the authorities of institutions. If students are sent down or suspended their local education authority has the power to terminate their grants.

Teachers (Courses)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will institute a survey into the extent to which individual local authorities provide cash benefits to teachers who attend courses during school holiday time over and above the direct costs of attendance.

Sir Keith Joseph: No. I do not consider that such a survey would serve any useful purpose.

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department about which employers have made pay deductions from teachers in dispute and which have not.

Sir Keith Joseph: I understand that all local education authorities deduct pay from teachers who take strike action. However, the teacher unions have engaged in other forms of disruption, short of strikes, in order to prosecute their pay claim. I believe that only eight authorities continue to make deductions from teachers who, although present at work, refuse to cover for absent colleagues. I understand that no LEA is making deductions in respect of any other forms of disruptive action.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster-General if he will give the figures for the number of redundancies notified in Great Grimsby for each year from 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information relating to confirmed redundancies is given in the table.

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur in the Grimsby Jobcentre Area† from 1979 to 1984*

	Number
1979	Nil
1980	1,005
1981	1,886
1982	880
1983	1,436
1984	1,081

Notes:

* Confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving ten or more workers.

† Grimsby jobcentre area is the best available fit for Great Grimsby.

Explosives Legislation

Mr. Skeet asked the Paymaster-General whether he proposes to seek to amend the Explosives Act 1875, the Explosives Act 1923 and the Explosives (Northern Ireland) Act 1924, taking into account changes in the type and use of explosives so as to provide for a certificate of competence for people handling explosives.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety Commission is progressively updating the Explosives Acts to take account of technological change. The Classification and Labelling of Explosives Regulations 1983 came into operation on 1 November 1983. A consultative document on the draft Conveyance of Explosives by Road Regulations has been published. The need for training and certificates of competence will be considered in due course.

Wage Costs

Mr. Richard Page asked the Paymaster-General what information he has as to the cumulative increases in wage costs in the United Kingdom over the last five and 10 years

respectively; and what information he has as to how these figures compare with the equivalent figures for the United States of America, West Germany and Japan.

Mr. Alan Clark: Broadly comparable figures for the countries requested are only available for wages in manufacturing industries.

These are given in the following table.

Wages per head: Manufacturing

	*Great Britain	†USA	‡West Germany	Japan
Percentage increase				
1979-84	76	37	24	29
1974-84	278	107	70	100

Source: OECD 'Main Economic Indicators'

Notes:
* Average weekly earnings—all employees
† Average hourly earnings—production workers
‡ Average hourly earnings—manual workers
Average monthly earnings—manual workers

Community Programme

Mr. Galley asked the Paymaster-General how many community programme places have remained vacant for three months or more during 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: Statistics are not kept of the length of time that such vacancies remain unfilled, and the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Statistics (London)

Mr. Freeson asked the Paymaster-General if he will provide a breakdown of the registered unemployed in *(a)* the London borough of Brent and *(b)* Greater London to show (i) the age and (ii) the type of worker involved.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Brent and Greater London as at 10 October 1985 analysed by age.

Some information by types of unemployed worker is available from the labour force survey at national and regional level, but the sample size is too small to produce such analysis for local authority districts.

Unemployment male and females together—10 October 1985—Age analysis

Years	*London borough of Brent*	*Greater London*
Under 17	161	6,797
17	375	12,482
18	636	17,026
19	804	
20-24	3,872	19,218
25-29	2,564	90,571
30-34	1,665	62,891
35-39	1,210	41,753
40-44	1,043	32,970
45-49	1,190	26,818
50-54	1,181	27,541
55-59	1,268	27,265
60 and over	441	32,116
		12,147

Job Vacancies and Training (London)

Mr. Freeson asked the Paymaster General if he will provide a breakdown of the job vacancies available and vacancies for all available kinds of training and retraining in *(a)* the London borough of Brent and *(b)* Greater London.

Mr. Alan Clark: Analysis of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres is made quarterly both by industry, most recently in August, and by occupation, most recently in September. This information is available in the Library. Table 1 shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies in the area covered by the Kilburn, Wembley and Willesden jobcentres which closely corresponds to the London borough of Brent, and at jobcentres in Greater London, as at 2 August 1985 analysed according to the 1980 standard industrial classification. Table 2 gives the numbers of unfilled vacancies in the corresponding areas as at 6 September 1985 analysed by occupational group.

I will write to the right hon. Member shortly in reply to his enquiry regarding vacancies for training and retraining.

Table 1—Unfilled vacancies at jobcentres August 1985

Standard Industrial Classification 1980	*London borough of Brent*	*Greater London*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1	34
Coal extraction	0	3
Mineral oil and natural gas extraction	0	4
Mineral oil processing	0	5
Nuclear fuel production	0	0
Gas, electricity and water	2	51
Extraction of other minerals and ores	0	4
Metal manufacture	3	34
Manfacture of non-metallic products	1	65
Chemical industry	10	143
Production of man-made fibres	0	2
Manufacture of metal goods	36	525
Mechanical engineering	3	69
Manufacture of office machinery and data processing equipment	48	442
Electrical and electronic engineering	3	62
Manufacture of motor vehicles	0	3
Shipbuilding and repairing	24	255
Manufacture of aerospace and other transport equipment	1	77
Instrument engineering	14	115

Standard Industrial Classification 1980	London borough of Brent	Greater London
Food, drink and tobacco	26	209
Textiles	4	55
Leather, footwear and clothing	45	878
Timber and furniture	10	251
Paper, printing, publishing	22	401
Other manufacturing	27	227
Construction	76	1,587
Wholesale distribution	136	1,073
Retail distribution	310	4,435
Hotel and catering	56	3,203
Repair of consumer goods and vehicles	9	298
Transport	50	1,085
Telecommunications	3	141
Insurance, banking, finance and business services	114	2,696
Public administration and defence	101	2,814
Medical and other health services	39	1,156
Other services—not elsewhere classified	97	1,919
TOTAL	1,271	24,321

Table 2—Unfilled vacancies at jobcentres—September 1985

Occupational group	London Borough of Brent	*Greater London
Managerial and professional	59	1,817
Clerical	178	3,857
Cashiers	7	474
Secretaries and typists	68	1,563
Other non-manual	251	4,745
Textile processing crafts	2	32
Food processing crafts	20	197
Glass and ceramic crafts	1	24
Printing and Bookbinding crafts	9	86
Textile and Leather working	44	849
Woodworking crafts	17	394
Metal making and treating	1	12
Setters	1	23
Turners	4	42
Setter operators	15	134
Tool makers	11	57
Fitters and fitter machinists	16	179
Vehicle making	20	319
Instrument makers	1	25
Electrical and electronic	21	370
Plumbing crafts	4	135
Constructional metal crafts	19	238
Painting and coating crafts	17	247
Construction	9	234
Mining crafts	0	0
Electricity power plant operators	0	1
Craftsmen and foremen not elsewhere classified	14	123
General labourers	34	464
Clerical sales and security	17	418
Catering and domestic	120	4,245
Road sweeping and personal service	128	2,587
Farming and fishing etc.	3	111
Processing making and repairing	50	796
Assembly packaging	34	444
Construction	14	307
Goods driving	49	653
Other transport operating	8	189
Storekeeping and materials moving	58	763
Miscellaneous	2	32
Total	1,326	27,186

* Figures for Greater London analysed by occupation include vacancies notified to Professional and Executive Recruitment. All other figures exclude such vacancies, and all figures exclude vacancies for self-employed work, and Community Programme vacancies.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

South Africa

86. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what measures are being taken to seek to ensure that no sensitive equipment is exported from Britain to South Africa.

Mr. Channon: The export of sensitive equipment to all destinations, including South Africa, is already controlled under the Export Goods (Control) Order 1985.

Information Technology

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the current cost to Her Majesty's Government for 1985-86 of maintaining the operational centres of the information technology centre programme.

Mr. Pattie: My Department, together with the Manpower Services Commission, provide the majority of governmental financial support to information technology centres. During 1985-86 it is currently estimated that, including trainees allowances, we shall jointly provide some £28·3 million.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice and guidance he has given to Alvey-funded research centres regarding their responses to requests for collaboration and information purchase from representatives of the United States information technology industry and the United States defence industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I have received no requests for such advice and guidance.

Australia (Investment)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice his Department offers British companies proposing to buy stakes in Australian companies about restrictions placed by the Australian Government upon foreign companies wishing to buy a controlling interest in an Australian company.

Mr. Butcher: Such companies would be advised to consult the Australian Government and, in particular, to

take note of the Foreign Takeovers Act 1975. This gives the Australian Government powers to prevent or reverse transactions in which a foreign company gains a controlling interest in an Australian company, if the transaction is deemed to be contrary to the national interest.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make representations to the Australian Government seeking reciprocity of treatment as between British companies wishing to buy into Australian companies in Australia, on the one hand, and Australian companies wishing to buy into British companies in the United Kingdom, on the other.

Mr. Butcher: If a case arises of a British firm experiencing difficulties in attempting to take over an Australian company, the Government would be prepared to consider taking the case up with the Australian Government where appropriate.

America (Foreign Technicians)

Sir Julian Ridsdale asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received from the Engineering Employers' Federation on new obstacles to visits by foreign technicians to the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The director general of the Engineering Employers' Federation wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend about this matter earlier this month. I shall be replying to the director general shortly. The Government have joined in representations to the United States authorities who are themselves seeking to resolve the problem.

Estate Agents (Declaration of Interest)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek to amend the Estate Agents Act to require estate agents to declare their interest in commissions on life insurance obtained in introducing purchasers to mortgages through the endowment method.

Mr. Butcher: No. The Financial Services Bill, which will be introduced shortly, will provide for the regulation of life insurance intermediaries of all sorts, including the disclosure of commission payments.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give figures for manufacturing investment in the United Kingdom in inflation adjusted terms for each year from 1974 to the latest year available.

Mr. Butcher: Available information on manufacturing investment only is given in the following table.

*Capital investment in United Kingdom Manufacturing Industry **

	£ million at 1980 prices †
1974	7,431
1975	7,135
1976	6,838
1977	7,253
1978	7,904
1979	8,230
1980	7,314
1981	5,698
1982	5,516
1983	5,557
1984	6,372

* Divisions 2-4 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980), including assets leased to manufacturers from the financial industries.
† Series expressed in terms of 1980 prices to adjust for inflation.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were employed in the special steels division of the British Steel Corporation in May 1979; and how many are so employed at the present time.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The special steels division did not exist under that name until 1980. In the BSC works which now constitute the special steels division, 15,721 people were employed in May 1979. The number in September 1985 was 8,520.

Selective Financial Assistance

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been provided to companies in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area under section 7 of the Industry Act 1972, since 1972.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Section 7 assistance is available only to companies in the assisted areas of Great Britain and, as Portsmouth travel-to-work area has never been an assisted area, no regional selective assistance has been provided to companies in the area.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report (a)* the numbers employed in the 725 companies currently using the Export Credits Guarantee Department's comprehensive bank guarantee schemes and *(b)* percentages of business activity involved in exports of their companies.

Mr. Channon: This information is not readily available.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if the recent review of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's comprehensive external trade review will take into account both the financial outcome of the facility in the Export Credits Guarantee Department's terms and the wider economic impact of the facility for United Kingdom exporters.

Mr. Channon: Reviews of this facility take into account its impact on United Kingdom trade generally and the views of current users of these guarantees on all aspects.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish an estimate of the impact of phasing out the Export Credits Guarantee Department's comprehensive bank guarantees on small exporters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The impact of phasing out these guarantees will be small. Banks and other financial

institutions are able to provide finance for exports by viable companies without a guarantee direct from ECGD. The two-year period for phasing out the guarantees will allow ample time for exporters to transfer to alternative arrangements.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amount paid out by the Export Credits Guarantee Department to private sector brokers in 1984-85; and if he will provide an estimate of their effectiveness.

Mr. Channon: The amounts paid by the Export Credits Guarantee Department to private sector brokers in 1984-85 totalled £2,486,000. It is up to individual ECGD policyholders whether to appoint a broker. It is not possible to quantify exactly the financial benefit to ECGD from the activities of brokers but I am satisfied that brokers play a useful role in selling and servicing ECGD cover and in relieving the Department of certain administrative functions. To be eligible for commissions, brokers have to conform to standards of conduct and competence laid down in an agreement between ECGD and the United Kingdom Credit Insurance Brokers' Committee.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the future of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's comprehensive external trade guarantee; and if United Kingdom merchants and others can be assured of its continued availability.

Mr. Channon: The outturn of this guarantee facility has been under review periodically since changes were made to it in 1981 in an endeavour to reduce the high level of losses it was sustaining. I cannot anticipate the outcome of the review of the facility's outturn in 1985-86.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total value of export finance advanced to United Kingdom exporters via the Export Credits Guarantee Department's comprehensive basic guarantee schemes over the last five financial years.

Mr. Channon: Finance for exports insured under ECGD's comprehensive guarantee schemes is made available by banks against the Department's comprehensive bank guarantees, where the exporter requests such an ancillary guarantee. The amounts of finance advanced and remaining outstanding under these arrangements at the end of the last four financial years totalled: 1981-82—£551 million; 1982-83 — £327 million; 1983-84 — £301 million; 1984-85—£184 million. Further amounts would have been advanced by the banks early in each year and repaid within that same year. The amounts for earlier years are not available.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total cumulative losses under the Export Credits Guarantee Department's comprehensive basic guarantee schemes; and if he will list under each facility the percentage of total claims payments for that facility attributable to the 10 biggest loss-making individual guarantees.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the losses incurred by the Export Credits Guarantee Department in 1984-85, showing the amount and percentage due to political causes and the administration costs of the Export Credits Guarantee Department in the same year.

Mr. Channon: The total amount of claims paid by the Export Credits Guarantee Department in the financial year 1984-85 was £834·9 million, of which £683·5 million (82 per cent.) resulted from political causes of loss, mainly delays in the transfer of currency. The administration costs of the Department in the same year were £33·9 million.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of jobs lost as a result of the implementation of the recent review of management and organisation of the Export Credits Guarantee Department; and if he will estimate the resulting financial savings.

Mr. Channon: No jobs have been lost to date as a result of the implementation of this review's recommendations, which is continuing.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make an estimate of the impact of the Export Credits Guarantee Department's comprehensive bank guarantees on total export orders and on employment arising from those orders.

Mr. Channon: Following a review of these guarantees, which included views solicited from those exporters making use of them currently, I reached the conclusion that phasing them out over a two-year period would have no significant effect on exports or employment levels in exporting companies. Alternative sources of finance are available.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the future alternative sources of comparably priced export finance available for small companies.

Mr. Channon: A wide range of alternative sources of export finance is available from banks and other financial institutions, many of which publicise their facilities widely. The cost of such facilities is a matter between the provider and the user in each case.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Self-Employment (Taxation)

Mr. Leighton asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of tax units where the main source of income is self-employment income in 1984-85; and what were the equivalent figures for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Moore: The latest available information is for 1983-84. The number of tax units with main source self-employment income (usually but not invariably the largest source) in that year and comparable information for the previous five years is as follows:

Year	Number of tax units (thousands)
1978-79	1,690
1979-80	1,760
1980-81	1,820
1981-82	1,840
1982-83	1,970
1983-84	2,100

Taxation

Mr. Greenway asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to public funds of a reduction in income tax to 25 and 20 per cent. respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: The direct revenue cost of reducing the basic rate of income tax to 25 per cent. and 20 per cent. would be about £6 billion and £12 billion, respectively, in a full year at 1986-87 levels of income.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding tax cuts.

Mr. Moore: Many.

VAT (Staff Disciplinary Procedures)

Dr. Mawhinney asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Customs and Excise employees involved on value added tax work have been subject to disciplinary procedures in each of the last 10 years *(a)* nationally, *(b)* in the Halifax office and *(c)* in the Peterborough office.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 November 1985, c. 92]: Over the past 10 years, 222 Customs and Excise staff employed on value added tax work have been subject to disciplinary procedures for matters sufficiently serious to warrant report to headquarters. The numbers in each year are:

	Numbers
1975	13
1976	35
1977	20
1978	18
1979	18
1980	21
1981	21
1982	21
1983	21
1984	20
*1985	14

* To date.

Four of these were employed in the Halifax VAT office, one case in each of the years 1976, 1979, 1980 and 1981, and two at Peterborough, both cases in 1979.

VAT

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give detailed estimates of the projected loss of revenue to the Exchequer from the possible abolition of value added tax on credit transactions between registered traders.

Mr. Brooke: Of the order of £2·3 billion a year. This is an estimate of the tax charged on taxable supplies to businesses which is at present irrecoverable by them. It includes estimates of VAT both on businesses expenditure on cars and entertainment and on taxable supplies to registered businesses with some exempt outputs. Although this loss could be prevented, it could only be at the cost of extra complexity both in the operation of the tax and for the trader.

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Brooke: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the Library of the House.

Manual records are maintained in a number of areas in the Treasury. Access to records of individuals employed in the Department is restricted to the head of the Department and to the staff within the establishments and organisation group and personnel sections in locations.

The superannuation division of the Treasury makes pension awards to civil servants employed in a number of Departments. The manual records maintained by the division may only be accessed by the head of the pension awarding section and his staff.

Manual files containing pay and related information for employees of some 65 Government Departments are held at Chessington computer centre. Access to the files is limited to staff in the pay office directly concerned with the accounts. Where exceptionally other authorised people need access, eg Audit, movement of the file is recorded. Manual files despatched from the Centre are directed only to known authorised individuals in customer departments.

TRANSPORT

Planning Inquiries

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether it is his policy to appoint, to conduct planning inquiries into proposed road schemes, inspectors who have already reported on neighbouring and related developments and who, in so doing, have commented publicly upon aspects of the proposed schemes.

Mrs. Chalker: No. Inspectors for inquiries are nominated by the Lord Chancellor, but if the Secretary of State thought that an inspector might be prejudiced in conducting an inquiry by his experience on any previous inquiry or by any comments he had made, he would not appoint him.

M25 (Traffic Flows)

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the current number of vehicles using the stretch of the M25 from Hunton bridge

to the M40 interchange per week; and how this figure compares with the figure predicted before that section was constructed.

Mrs. Chalker: The Department's forecasts for traffic flows on this length of M25 were in terms of an annual average for a 16-hour period on weekdays. No information is available about current flows for the length of M25 from the A412 link road to the A404 Chorley Wood. The figures for the sections on either side are given in the table.

Section of M25	*16 hour weekday flow*	
	Annual Average Forecast for 1987 (made in 1980)	*Measured Flow October 1985*
M40 Interchange-A412	55,000-60,000 vehicles per day	66,000
A404-Hunton Bridge (A405)	65,000-75,000*	74,000

* This forecast was made at a time when this length of road existed as A405, but had no yet been appropriated as part of M25.

A127 (Safety Standards)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will institute a review of safety standards on the A127; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We are continuously reviewing the scope for safety schemes to eliminate particular local hazards. Next year, consultants will be undertaking a study of the future needs of the A127.

Dartford Tunnel

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the results of the current inquiry into the feasibility of a third Thames crossing at Dartford.

Mrs. Chalker: I announced in June, at columns 225-26, our intention of commissioning an engineering study for a third crossing at Dartford. My right hon. Friend, however, suggested to the Select Committee in July that the private sector might be willing to undertake the provision of a third crossing, and the inquiries we have had from construction and financial undertakings have confirmed their interest in this proposition.

We shall shortly be issuing guidelines inviting interested parties to submit proposals, and commissioning data collection work on the engineering aspects to help the preparation of proposals.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if there are any proposals to close temporarily one of the lanes of the Dartford road tunnel for repairs; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The tunnel is wholly the responsibility of Kent and Essex county councils. I understand that it is planned to carry out a major refurbishment of the northbound tunnel over a period of two years, starting in early 1986. Work will be carried out on weekdays at night, from 9 pm (11 pm on Fridays) to 5.30 am (7 am on Saturdays). There will be no closures in July and August. The aim is to cause little or no disruption. One or other tunnel is in any case closed most nights for routine maintenance.

Folkestone-Honiton Trunk Route

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest situation on improvements to the Folkestone-Honiton trunk route.

Mrs. Chalker: There are a total of 21 national schemes currently in the roads programme to improve the route between Folkestone and Honiton. Details of how each scheme is progressing are as follows:

A259 Rye bypass, East Sussex	Route options being investigated with a view to public consultation in 1986.
A259 Winchelsea bypass, East Sussex	Hope to announce preferred route shortly, with view to draft order publication late 1986.
A259 Bexhill and Hastings western bypass, East Sussex	New scheme added this year. Design agency to be appointed early 1986.
A27 Pevensey bypass, East Sussex	Draft line and side roads orders published. Draft compulsory purchase order to be published shortly.
A27 Polegate bypass, East Sussex	Scheme restored to programme this year. Design agency to be appointed early 1986.
A27 Brighton bypass, East/West Sussex	Route fixed. Hope to publish draft compulsory purchase orders summer 1986.
A27 Patching junction improvement, West Sussex	Scheme restored to programme this year. Design agency to be appointed early 1986.
A27 Arundel bypass, West Sussex	New scheme added this year. Route options being investigated with a view to public consultation by early 1987.
A27 Fontwell bypass, West Sussex	Final decision announced with a view to start of works in summer 1986.
A27 Westhampnett bypass, West Sussex	Hope to announce preferred route shortly. Earliest start date spring 1989.
A27 Havant-Chichester, Hampshire/West Sussex	Tenders to be invited shortly for start of works spring 1986.
A31 Ashley heath grade separated junction, Dorset	New scheme added this year. Consulting engineers to be appointed in 1986.
A31 Ferndown bypass, Dorset	Under construction. Scheduled for completion February 1987.
A35 Tolpuddle to Puddletown bypass, Dorset	Restored to active programme June 1985. Consulting engineers will shortly be appointed to prepare the scheme.
A35 Yellow Ham hill to Troytown, Dorset	Public consultation on possible options currently in progress.

A35 Dorchester bypass, Dorset	Public inquiry held at beginning of 1985. Secretaries of State now considering inspector's report.
A35 Bridport link road, Dorset	Public inquiry held autumn 1984. Decision announced October 1985. Expected to start work towards the end of 1986.
A35 Chideock-Morecombelake bypass, Dorset	Restored to active programme June 1985. Consulting engineers to be appointed very shortly to prepare scheme.
A35 Charmouth bypass, Dorset	Public inquiry has just finished. Awaiting inspector's report.
A35 Axminster bypass, Devon	Preferred route announced May 1985. Draft orders to be published during 1986.
A35 Honiton link, Devon	Draft orders have been published. Design is being reconsidered.

In addition, A27 Langstone flyover, Hampshire was opened to traffic on 1 November.

Preparation work on the following further schemes has been temporarily suspended:

A35 Winterbourne Abbas bypass, Dorset	Under active study.
A35 Wilmington bypass, Dorset	Under active study.
A259 New Romney, Dymchurch, St. Mary's Bay and Hythe bypasses, Kent	To remain suspended pending review.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what legislation, and in what time scale, he has in mind to change the duration of heavy goods vehicle drivers' licences and the free driving tests for heavy goods vehicle drivers if they develop a limb disability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government have accepted the recommendations of the working party on medical standards that the duration of heavy goods vehicle drivers' licences should be five years, as for public service vehicle drivers, and that the driving test to establish a licence-holder's continued fitness after developing a limb disability should be free of charge. The necessary parliamentary legislation will be introduced at the next opportunity, but I cannot yet say when this will be.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is now prepared to consider a specialist panel of advisers to give advice on appeals for heavy goods vehicle drivers if they lose their licences on medical grounds.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) announced on 14 June 1985 that there would not be a specialist panel to give advice on appeals against decisions taken by the licensing authorities on medical grounds. My right hon. Friend has, however, appointed two new honorary medical panels to advise licensing authorities on cardio-vascular conditions and diabetes in relation to driving. A similar panel on driving and disorders of the nervous system has existed for many years.

Mr. Patchett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what advice will be forthcoming from his Department to unions and employers to help them frame improved insurance schemes for heavy goods vehicle drivers if they lose their licences and jobs on medical grounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This is a matter for negotiation within the road transport industry.

Hurn Airport

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the implications for Hurn airport, Christchurch, Dorset, of the Government's proposals for local authority owned airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: If Parliament approves the Government's proposals, Bournemouth (Hurn) airport is likely to be required to adopt company form. This will bring several advantages as described in paragraphs 9.15 and 9.16 of the Government's White Paper on airports policy (Cmnd. 9542).

SCOTLAND

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* a computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Younger: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No 21" issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House Library.

There are no corresponding centrally issued guidelines in relation to the logging of access to manual files; and procedures vary according to the confidentiality or sensitivity of the data held.

List D Schools

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement giving the value of direct grants to list D schools in Scotland in the last financial year;

(2) what is the amount by which the rate support grant will be increased to reflect the increase in expenditure falling on local authorities as a result of grants to list D schools being terminated.

Mr. Younger: In 1984-85 direct grants of £5·36 million were paid to 18 voluntary list D schools representing half the costs of accommodating children placed by local authorities plus the full costs of accommodating children placed following court proceedings.

I have proposed to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities that relevant expenditure and aggregate exchequer grant should be increased in 1986-87 by £3·9 million to reflect in full the additional costs falling on authorities in respect of children placed by them in 13 remaining voluntary schools which will no longer receive direct grants. A further sum estimated at £2 million will be payable in 1986-87 in the form of direct grants to two voluntary schools providing secure accommodation and in payment of the full costs of accommodating children placed in the schools following court proceedings. Assistance will also be made available towards certain closure costs of any voluntary schools ceasing to operate in 1986.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the findings and data obtained in the report of the standing conference on drug abuse fieldwork survey in the Greater Glasgow health board published in October, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. John MacKay: This valuable report, which was commissioned and funded by my Department, recognises the difficulty of making accurate assessments of the nature and extent of drug misuse. The extent of the problem in local communities must therefore be kept under continuous review by all agencies concerned. This should provide the basis for determining the need for treatment and rehabilitation services and for developing appropriate local strategies for prevention. The report also stresses the need for effective arrangements for co-operation and co-ordination among local agencies concerned with the problem of drug misuse.

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will indicate the steps that are being taken to involve the education service in Scotland in the campaign against drug misuse in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: The education service has an important part to play in combating drug misuse among young people in Scotland. I have today issued a circular to education authorities which outlines various measures being taken to help and encourage them in this. In addition to the continuing public information and education campaign to prevent and discourage drug misuse which was launched by the Scottish Health Education Group in February, the circular describes two new initiatives:

(i) over the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 I am providing funds totalling £57,000 to the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum for a project for the preparation of teaching materials which has been set up in liaison with Strathclyde Regional Council. It is expected that materials from this project will be available to schools throughout Scotland during session 1986-87;

(ii) the specific grant scheme for in-service training 1985-86 has been extended to cover training programmes introduced by education authorities for key teachers on drugs issues on the basis of guidelines drawn up by a national planning group chaired by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools. A sum of £100,000 has been set aside in 1985-86 for this purpose. The scheme will continue in 1986-87.

In addition in the course of its normal visits to schools Her Majesty's Inspectorate will discuss with headteachers their school policies and machinery for tackling drug misuse.

I seek the co-operation of all sectors of the education service in combating the growing menace of drug misuse and I hope that the initiatives introduced today will make a positive contribution to that end.

A copy of the circular introducing these new measures (SED Circular No. 1135) has been laid in the House Library.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

UNESCO

84. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom membership of UNESCO.

Mr. Raison: The UNESCO general conference finished on 9 November. Ministers will now consider whether, in the light of the results of the conference, taken together with any other relevant developments in the organisation during this year, enough has been achieved to warrant reconsideration of the British decisions to withdraw.

Port Stanley (Hospital)

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made on the new hospital in Port Stanley.

Mr. Raison: Work has now begun on site for the construction of a new shared civilian and military hospital in Stanley. It will comprise an acute care wing, to be named the Prince Andrew wing, and a civilian health centre and administrative facilities to be converted from existing buildings. There will also be sheltered housing for the elderly and staff accommodation. The construction contract has been awarded to the Fairclough-Miller joint venture. Site supervision will be by Building Design Partnership, which carried out the detailed design work and prepared the tender documentation.

The overall cost of the project will be £11·3 million. Contributions towards the cost of the sheltered housing have been made by Mr. Jack Hayward (£1 million) and the States of Guernsey (£100,000). The remaining costs will be shared between the Overseas Development Administration (£6·1 million) and the Ministry of Defence (£4·1 million). The project is scheduled for completion in January 1987.

DEFENCE

Research and Development Budget (University Sector)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the criteria used to determine the amount of his Department's research and development budget allocated to the university sector.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Research and development work is placed with the university sector when they are best able to carry it out and are interested in doing so. Some £10 million will be spent with them in 1985-86. This

figure is expected to rise with the introduction of joint Research Council-Ministry of Defence research grants, announced on 4 November 1985.

Technology Transfer

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on technology transfer in the light of the report introduced at the meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly in San Francisco recently.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government's policy remains as set out in the statement on the Defence Estimates 1984 (Cmnd. 9227-I): to balance the requirements of legitimate civil trade with those of national and Alliance security, and to ensure that export controls focus on areas of genuine strategic concern where they can be effectively enforced.

Nimrod

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Nimrod airborne early warning system to be operational.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Kingston Upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 29 October 1985 at column 474.

Procurement

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of the facilities of United Kingdom based defence procurement contractors paid £5 million or more for equipment in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Norman Lamont The information requested is given for 1983-84. That relating to the years 1984-85 and 1985-86 is not yet available.

Firm	*Constituency*
Over £100 million	
British Aerospace plc (Aircraft)	Chertsey and Walton
British Aerospace plc (Dynamics)	Stevenage
British Shipbuilders	Newcastle Upon Tyne, Central
Ferranti plc	Cheadle
The General Electric Co plc	City of London and Westminster, South
The Plessey Co Ltd	Ilford, North
Racal Electronics plc	Berkshire, East
Rolls Royce Ltd	City of London and Westminster, South
Royal Ordnance Factories	City of London and Westminster, South
Thorne-EMI plc	City of London and Westminster, South
Westland plc	Yeovil
£50 million to £100 million	
Austin Rover Group Ltd	Oxford, West and Abingdon
Dowty Group plc	Cheltenham
Hunting Associated Industries plc	Chelsea
Philips Electronics & Associated Industries Ltd	City of London and Westminster, South
£25 million to £50 million	
General Motors Ltd	Luton, South
Lucas Industries plc	Birmingham, Hall Green
Marshall of Cambridge (Engineering) Ltd	Cambridge
Pilkington Bros plc	St Helens, North
Short Bros Ltd	Belfast, East
Smith Industries plc	Hendon, South
United Scientific Holdings plc	City of London and Westminster, South
Vickers plc	City of London and Westminster, South
£10 million to £25 million	
Acrow plc	Uxbridge
British Electric Traction Co plc	City of London and Westminster, South
BTR plc	City of London and Westminster, South
Cable and Wireless plc	Holborn and St Pancras
Cossor Electronics Ltd	Harlow
Cambridge Electronic Industries plc	Cambridge
Dunlop Holdings plc	City of London and Westminster, South
Flight Refuelling (Holdings) plc	Dorset, North
Guest Keen and Nettlefolds plc	City of London and Westminster, South
Harland and Wolff Ltd	Belfast, East
Hawker Siddeley Group plc	City of London and Westminster, South
ICL plc	Putney
ITM Offshore	City of London and Westminster, South
Northern Engineering Industries plc	Newcastle upon Tyne, North
Oerlikon Buerle Holdings Ltd*	Grantham
Remploy Ltd	Brent, East
Singer Co (UK) Ltd	Shoreham
STC plc	City of London and Westminster, South
The Throgmorton Trust plc	City of London and Westminster, South
UKAEA	City of London and Westminster, South
The Weir Group Ltd	Glasgow, Central
£5 million to £10 million	
BICC plc	Holborn and St Pancras
B Thompson Ltd	Hampstead and Highgate
Englehard Industries Ltd	Sutton and Cheam
Ferguson Industrial Holdings plc	City of London and Westminster, South
Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Co	Wolverhampton, North-East
Gresham Lion plc	Feltham and Heston
Louis Newmark plc	Croydon, North-West
MacTaggart Scott (Holdings) Ltd	Midlothian
Portsmouth Aviation Ltd	Portsmouth, North
Rank Organisation plc	City of London and Westminster, South
RCA Ltd	Spelthorne
RFD Ltd	Surrey, South-West
Saft (UK) Ltd	Twickenham
Schlumberger Measurement and Control Ltd	Aldershot
Siemens Ltd	Spelthorne
S Pearson and Son plc	Cheltenham
Systems Designers International plc	Aldershot
Thomas Tilling plc	City of London and Westminster, South
Vantona Group plc	Manchester, Central
Western Scientific Instruments Ltd	Croydon, Central
Wilkinson Sword Group Ltd	Slough
Yarrow plc	Glasgow, Hillhead

* Work carried out at British Manufacture and Research Co Ltd, Grantham.

Many of the above firms carried out work for the MOD at a number of sites, but payment is made only to one or

more central locations. In these cases it has only been possible within the resources available to identify the companies' HQ locations.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the location and number by parliamentary constituency of *(a)* Ministry of Defence civilian personnel, *(b)* armed forces personnel and *(c)* employees of defence procurement contractors in receipt of £5 million or more in 1984-85.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Particulars are not held of the location and number by parliamentary constituency of Ministry of Defence civilian and armed forces personnel, and employees of defence procurement contractors. United Kingdom service and civilian personnel strengths by national totals for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and by regions of England are published in tables 4.9 (Service Personnel) and 5·4 (Civilian Staff) of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985, part 2 (Cmnd. 9430-II). The names of contractors in receipt of £5 million or more in 1983-84 are published in annex G of part 1 of the White Paper and will be updated for 1984-85 when the 1986 White Paper is published.

Bases and Facilities

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of *(a)* all United States non-nuclear bases in the United Kingdom and *(b)* all United Kingdom non-nuclear bases in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of *(a)* all Royal Air Force facilities in the United Kingdom and *(b)* all United States bases and facilities in the United Kingdom;

(3) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of *(a)* all royal ordnance factories, *(b)* all royal dockyards and *(c)* all Ministry of Defence facilities, itemising them also;

(4) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of *(a)* all army barracks and *(b)* all Royal Navy bases in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will answer shortly.

HMS Otter and Euryalus (Refit Costs)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek the consent of the parties concerned to the disclosure of the value of the contracts to refit HMS Otter and HMS Euryalus.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. It is, however, my intention to publish some indication of the comparison of costs between these two refits and those of the two similar ships which are being undertaken at Devonport dockyard.

Gurkhas (Hong Kong)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Gurkha troops are now stationed in Hong Kong.

Mr. Stanley: On 31 October, there were about 5,000 Gurkhas stationed in Hong Kong.

Host Nation Support

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the technical arrangements which have been made between the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany following the 1983 treaty on host nation support during crisis or war;

(2) what technical arrangements or other provisions have been made for German civilians provided to assist United Kingdom forces during crisis or war;

(3) if he will list the subjects of all technical arrangements which may be desired by either party which remain to be concluded between the United Kingdom and the Federal Republic of Germany following the 1983 treaty on host nations support during crisis or war.

Mr. Stanley: The formal arrangement under which German civilians would assist United Kingdom forces during crisis or war was signed between Her Majesty's Government and the Government of the Federal Republic on 13 December 1983. No technical arrangements under that agreement have been concluded to date, but a number are being prepared which will require support in such areas as:

Transport
Food and supplies
Fuel
Communications
Use of civil airfields and ports
Vehicles, plant and construction equipment
Maintenance and repair services
Civil labour

Ptarmigan Project

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the Ptarmigan project.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Ptarmigan will provide a secure, digital, tactical communications system for the Army and RAF in North West Europe, covering the forward, rear and communications zones. It will also become the bearer system for future command, control and information systems such as WAVELL and BATES.

The system is based on a lattice of communications centres, independent of the chain of command, and interconnected by secure multi-channel radio links. Groups of users, such as Headquarters, are connected by similar secure links and the communications centres provide automatic switching facilities between users.

Development of the main programme was completed in 1984 and Ptarmigan is now well into production, although development work on additional items will continue for several more years. The system is already in operation with the first divisional user in BAOR. It is planned that a second division will be equipped by the end of this year and the whole of 1(BR) Corps by mid-1986, with the system extended to the rear areas by the end of the decade.

Current programme costs are estimated at some £1·1 billion.

As regards the recently announced decision by the US Government to purchase a mobile subscriber equipment from GTE working with the French, rather than from Rockwell, which was working with Plessey, we are naturally disappointed that the decision went the way it did. We are investigating the background to the result of the US competition and hope that we can draw useful lessons from it.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Central America (War on Want Delegation)

3. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from members of the recent War on Want delegation to central America.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend, like all hon. Members, recently received a circular letter. As the letter urges we will continue to consider carefully our response to the Luxembourg meeting of EC-Central America and Contadora Foreign Ministers. My right hon. and learned Friend attended this meeting on 11 November and my right hon. and noble Friend attended on both 11 and 12 November.

Israel

14. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, at the next meeting with his Soviet counterpart, he will ask him to renew diplomatic relations with Israel.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend would expect to discuss middle eastern questions with Mr. Shevardnadze if he accepts our invitation to visit London. The precise agenda would be decided nearer the time.

Third World Debts

19. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with other EEC Foreign Ministers regarding debts in the Third world; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We remain concerned by the burden of debt carried by many developing countries. This is a subject I discuss regularly with my European Community colleagues.

EC Intergovernmental Conference

20. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the United Kingdom has not submitted any proposals for changes in the EEC treaties to the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Rifkind: We have already put forward practical proposals for improvements in decision-taking which could be implemented immediately without treaty amendments. They remain on the table.

Cyprus

21. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited Cyprus; and if he will list the people he met.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend stayed overnight in Cyprus on 27 October 1984. He was unable to meet the President or Foreign Minister on that occasion because they were overseas. But he has other regular opportunities to see them. Most recently he saw President Kyprianou at the United Nations last September.

Argentina

22. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take immediate steps to facilitate the resumption of diplomatic relations with Argentina.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have taken a series of initiatives since 1982 to improve bilateral relations with Argentina. Unfortunately Argentina has not so far reciprocated. We believe that agreement on practical measures of benefit to both sides offers the best way of making progress.

58. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress being made in developing relations with Argentina.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I told the House during the debate on the Address on 8 November [Vol. 86, c. 221-2], we have since 1982 taken a series of initiatives designed to open the way to practical co-operation with Argentina. Unfortunately Argentina has not so far reciprocated. We very much hope that the Argentine Government will come to see that this is the only realistic way to make progress.

South Africa

23. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of internal reforms in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As I made clear to the House on 23 October [Vol. 84, c. 305-13] we recognise that positive steps have been taken. However, we remain convinced that what is urgently needed now is a dialogue between the South African Government and genuine representatives of the black community.

47. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy following the report of the United Nations panel for the public hearings on the activities of transnational corporations in South Africa and Namibia.

Mr. Rifkind: We did not participate in these pblic hearings. We remain convinced that transnational corporations make an important contribution to the goal of peaceful change in South Africa. We shall continue to urge British companies to comply fully with the provisions of the EC code of conduct.

49. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any recommendations to British nationals working in South Africa concerning their future security.

Mr. Rifkind: No.

55. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the use of sanctions as an instrument of foreign policy in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We are opposed to the use of economic and trade boycotts against South Africa since in our view they would be damaging to the prospects for peaceful change and harmful to the black population and to neighbouring countries.

59. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current situation in South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) earlier today.

68. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to make representations on grounds additional to humanitarian grounds in cases where the South African Government proposes to execute persons who oppose the apartheid régime.

Mr. Rifkind: The basis for any representations which we might make must depend on the particular circumstances of the case, but we have usually considered it most appropriate and effective to make representations on humanitarian grounds.

73. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what facilities his Department provides for trade delegations to South Africa.

Mr. Rifkind: In accordance with the programme of action which we agreed with our Commonwealth partners at Nassau, we will no longer be funding trade missions to South Africa. The last such mission will end on 6 December. Diplomatic posts in South Africa will, however, continue to provide advice and assistance to individuals or groups who visit South Africa to promote the export of goods and services on the same basis as elsewhere.

74. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African authorities about restrictions placed on British journalists working in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

79. **Mr. John Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last discussed the situation in South Africa with His Excellency Dr. Denis Worrall, the ambassador of the Republic of South Africa to the Court of St. James.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have made our views known to the South African Government at ministerial level on numerous occasions, most recently on 24 October.

81. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the effect of the statement at the Nassau conference of Commonwealth Heads of Government on South Africa has had on that Government's domestic policies towards the black population.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We hope that the South African Government will respond positively to the accord reached by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at Nassau, both in its policies towards the black population and in its co-operation with the proposed Eminent Persons Group.

African National Congress

24. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now arrange to meet representatives of the African National Congress.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson).

Falkland Islands (United Nations Debate)

25. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with other EEC countries concerning the forthcoming United Nations debate on the Falklands.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We keep in close touch with our European partners on a wide range of issues arising at the United Nations, including the question of the Falkland Islands. The details of these exchanges must remain confidential.

Nigeria (British Prisoners)

26. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the imprisonment of two British helicopter engineers in Nigeria.

Mr. Rifkind: Two British engineers employed by Bristows Helicopters were convicted in the Lagos high court on 7 October on charges of stealing and conspiracy to steal an aircraft and were sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment. We have made a number of high level representations to the Nigerian Government to express our concern at the severity of these sentences. An appeal has now been submitted and is expected to be heard early next year. We have expressed the hope to the Nigerian authorities that the appeal will be dealt with expeditiously and lead to an equitable outcome.

Central America

27. **Mr. James Lamond** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has held with the United States of America concerning American involvement in central America.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly discuss all important issues, including the situation in central America, with the United States Government at a number of levels and they are fully aware of our views.

37. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions Her Majesty's Government are taking to support the Contadora process.

Mr. Eggar: Our consistent support for the Contadora process was demonstrated most recently by our full and constructive participation in the EC-central America Ministerial meeting in Luxembourg on 11 and 12 November.

Jordan

28. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions he has had with the Government of Jordan following the cancellation of talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Jordanian representatives.

Mr. Renton: I met King Hussein on 16 October; we remain in close touch with the Jordanian Government.

Pakistan

29. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's present relations with the Government of Pakistan.

53. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on diplomatic relations with Pakistan.

Mr. Eggar: We maintain good relations with Pakistan.

Qatar

30. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with the state of Qatar.

Mr. Renton: We continue to enjoy strong and close relations with Qatar. Clearly it gains new strength and vigour from the state visit the Amir paid to Britain last week. Of importance too are the visits of the sort my hon. Friend took part in in October when a delegation of Members of this House visited Doha.

EC (Priority Objectives)

31. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his present priority objectives within the European Community.

60. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the Government's priorities within the EEC for the forthcoming Session.

Mr. Rifkind: Our objectives are early completion of the Common Market improvements in decision-taking, reform of the common agricultural policy, improvements in world trade rules and co-operation on foreign policy.

EC (Trade Barriers)

32. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made about barriers to trade within the Community to the European Economic Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Rifkind: These matters are discussed primarily in the Internal Market Council, where my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade (Mr. Channon) represents the United Kingdom. At the meeting on 7 October he called for early progress on the removal of barriers to trade in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council at Milan last June.

Multilateral Disarmament

33. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures Her Majesty's Government are proposing in concert with other countries to achieve multilateral disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We participate actively in most multilateral disarmament fora and are of course consulting closely with our allies on the range of issues under discussion in these fora. Our principal aim must be to achieve verifiable and balanced agreements to reduce the threat of nuclear or conventional conflict while maintaining our national and Alliance security.

EC Reform

34. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in the discussions on European Economic Community reforms; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett).

Lebanon (Kidnappings)

35. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government concerning the release of Western diplomats and journalists kidnapped in Lebanon.

Mr. Eggar: We have regularly made it clear that the holding of American, French, Italian and British hostages in Lebanon serves no useful purpose. We urge those responsible to release all the hostages unharmed. We are particularly concerned about Alec Collett, a Briton, and Dr. Thomas Sutherland, a dual British-American national. Representations on their behalf have been made to several Governments in the middle east. We will continue to work for the release of the hostages and to keep in close touch with the US, French and other Governments.

Foreign Ministers (EC and Central America)

36. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent summit in Luxembourg of Foreign Ministers from the EEC and central America.

Mr. Eggar: The Luxembourg meeting was a practical demonstration by the members of the European Community of support for the Contadora peace process. Political and economic agreements with the central American states were successfully concluded. The European Community agreed to increase substantially aid to promote economic co-operation in the region.

Latin America (Debt)

38. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the measures taken by the United Kingdom to alleviate the Latin American debt crisis.

Mr. Rifkind: We are continuing to work with other Governments, international institutions and banks to help the Latin American countries to tackle their debt problems flexibly and effectively.

Falkland Islands Fishery Zone

39. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of his discussions with other nations on the establishment of a Falkland Islands fishery zone.

Mr. Eggar: We are in contact with all Governments with an interest in the south-west Atlantic fishery. We

have impressed on them the need for a multilaterally-based fisheries conservation and management regime, and urged them to participate in the FAO's constructive initiative to this end. We are encouraged by the statement made on 12 November by the Argentine Secretary for Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, advocating a technical assessment by the FAO of fishery resources and fishing activity in the area.

EC (Development)

40. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is proposing a further meeting with his European Economic Community counterparts in the Council of Ministers to discuss future developments in the Community.

Mr. Rifkind: The Inter-Governmental Conference will meet again on 26 November to discuss the future development of the Community.

46. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further proposals he intends to place before his European Community partners for the development of Community policies.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We will work for the objectives set out in the Queen's Speech. We shall make further proposals as the need arises.

South Africa (Delegation)

41. **Mr. Caborn** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to ensure that Her Majesty's Government's member of the Commonwealth delegation visiting South Africa has no economic interests in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The British nominee to the Group of Eminent Persons established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Nassau is Lord Barber. His wide experience of government and international affairs has been increased by his chairmanship of the Standard Chartered Bank in which capacity he has had the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of South Africa and many other African countries.

Geneva Arms Talks

42. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress at the arms talks in Geneva.

Mr. Renton: The recent Soviet proposals, put forward in response to earlier US proposals, are unbalanced and self-serving. But they contain positive elements on which we can build. The United States Government have put forward fresh proposals, building on their earlier approach, responding to concepts in the Russian ideas on which progress might be made, while rejecting obviously one-sided features. We have given our full support to this new United States move.

Extradition

43. **Dr. Michael Clark** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries with which the United Kingdom does not have extradition arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The countries are as follows:

Afghanistan	Laos
Algeria	Lebanon
Andorra	Libya
Angola	Liechtenstein
Bahrain	Madagascar
Benin	Maldives
Brazil	Mali
Brunei	Mauritania
Bulgaria	Mongolia
Burkina	Morocco
Burma	Mozambique
Burundi	Nepal
Cambodia	Niger
Cameroon	Oman
Cape Verde	Pakistan
Central African Republic	Philippines
Chad	Qatar
China	Rwanda
Comoros	Sao Tome and Principe
Congo, People's Republic of	Saudi Arabia
Costa Rica	Senegal
Djibouti	Somali Democratic Republic
Dominican Republic	South Africa
Egypt	Soviet Union
Equatorial Guinea	Spain
Ethiopia	Sudan
Gabon	Suriname
German Democratic Republic	Syria
Guinea	Togo
Guinea-Bissau	Tunisia
Holy See	Turkey
Honduras	United Arab Emirates
Indonesia	Vanuatu
Iran	Venezuela
Ivory Coast	Vietnam
Japan	Yemen Arab Republic
Jordan	Yemen, People's Democratic Republic of
Korea, Republic of	Zaire
Kuwait	

An extradition treaty was, however, signed with Spain on 22 July 1985, and will come into force after ratification by both countries.

EC (Home Market Integration)

44. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on progress being made to ensure an integrated home market within the European Community.

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom is working closely with Luxembourg and the Netherlands on the basis of the Commission's White Paper and the priorities identified by the Milan European Council to prepare a co-ordinated programme for action during our respective presidencies of the Community between now and the end of 1986.

Gibraltar

45. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions he has had with the Spanish Government regarding the lifting of the ban on airspace and ferry services which have been imposed on the dependent territory of Gibraltar.

Mr. Eggar: Following the full re-opening of the frontier on 5 February 1985, Spanish Government removed obstacles to land, sea and civil air traffic. We are in discussion with the Spanish authorities about the continuing restrictions on the flight paths of military aircraft using RAF Gibraltar.

Battlefield Nuclear Weapons

48. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for arms control of the modernisation of battlefield nuclear weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The future shape of NATO's short-range nuclear systems following the Montebello decision in 1983 to reduce them by 1,400 warheads, has been reviewed by the Alliance. Arms control considerations will be taken carefully into account as implementation of the decision takes place. Such systems are not at present the subject of arms control negotiations. Priority is rightly being given by the United States and Soviet Union to reaching agreements on the strategic and long-range intermediate categories.

Fylingdales (Facilities)

50. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the United States Government about the question of updating facilities at Fylingdales, in relation to the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Mr. Renton: Discussions about the American proposal to modernise the installation at Fylingdales are still in progress with the United States Administration. We are confident that both the continued existence and modernisation of the ballistic missile early warning system at Fylingdales will be in full conformity with American obligations under the anti-ballistic missile treaty.

South Africa (Air Defence System)

51. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he is now satisfied that the air defence system supplied by Plessey to the South African Government is not capable of and was not purchased for military use and was not in breach of the United Nations embargo.

Mr. Rifkind: The original export licence application was approved in 1974 on the understanding that the equipment was required in South Africa for an integrated air traffic control system, with a civil application. We have yet to see evidence that the equipment was intended for a primarily military use.

Palestine Liberation Organisation (Policy)

52. **Dr. M. S. Miller** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each statement made in 1985 by the Palestine Liberation Organisation regarding its policy towards accepting that part of the agreement between King Hussein and Yassir Arafat of 11 February which accepts United Nations Security Council resolution 242 and recognises the existence of the state of Israel.

Mr. Renton: We have noted no statement by the Palestine Liberation Organisation relating solely to these points. But PLO leaders, most recently Mr. Arafat in Cairo on 7 November, have frequently reaffirmed the importance of the 11 February agreement.

Latin America

54. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with the United States of America concerning United States policy in Latin America.

Mr. Eggar: We regularly discuss all important issues, including the situation in Latin America, with the United States Administration. They are fully aware of our views.

Saudi Arabia

56. **Mr. Mikardo** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government have sought assurances from the Saudi Arabian Government that military equipment supplied by the United Kingdom to Saudi Arabia will not be used against Israel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: A formal understanding for the sale of Tornado, Hawk and PC-9 aircraft to Saudi Arabia was signed on 26 September. Negotiations of a detailed memorandum of understanding will be concluded early next year. We have no reason to believe that Saudi Arabia intends to use Tornado and other aircraft supplied by Britain for other than its preferred aim of all-round deterrence. Saudi Arabia and her neighbours in the Gulf co-operation council face a number of threats, notably because of their proximity to the theatre of the Iran-Iraq war and the danger of Soviet expansion in the Horn of Africa.

East-West Relations

57. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of East-West relations.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We remain firmly committed to our policy of working for better East-West relations. We have been active in Europe. 1985 has brought some encouraging developments, in particular the resumption of US-Soviet nuclear arms control negotiations and the meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev which is currently under way in Geneva. We hope that meeting will lead to real progress in the arms control negotiations and an improvement in relations between the two countries.

Zimbabwe

Mr. Patrick Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for relations between the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe of moves towards a one-party state in Zimbabwe.

Mr. Rifkind: Constitutional changes in Zimbabwe are matters for Zimbabweans. The Zimbabwean Government have expressed an intention to proceed with any changes by constitutional means.

Middle East

62. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Renton: I refer to my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) earlier today.

69. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next intends to seek to visit the middle east.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to visit the middle east again early in the new year.

75. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he proposes to take further new steps to resolve the problems in the middle east.

Mr. Renton: The prime responsibility for a resolution of conflicts in the middle east must remain with those directly involved, but we shall continue to support all realistic initiatives towards peaceful solutions.

78. **Mr. Robert C. Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to encourage King Hussein to enter direct talks with Israel following the call of the Israeli Premier Shimon Peres at the United Nations and what responses he has received.

Mr. Renton: We keep in close touch with King Hussein and fully support his initiative which envisages early peace negotiations under appropriate auspices. We welcome Mr. Peres' acknowledgement in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 21 October of the need for an international framework for negotiations.

Guatemala

63. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Guatemala following the recent elections.

Mr. Eggar: We have no diplomatic or consular relations with Guatemala, which broke diplomatic relations in 1963 and consular relations in 1981. The elections in Guatemala have not yet concluded.

Budgetary Discipline

64. **Mr. Golding** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the results achieved by the budgetary discipline arrangements discussed by EEC Foreign Ministers in the current year.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The draft 1986 budget established by the Council on 17 and 18 September was within the maximum level of permitted expenditure for 1986 established by Ministers in July and in accordance with the budget discipline arrangements agreed last year.

Soviet Jewry

65. **Rev. Martin Smyth** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has requested the American Government at the forthcoming summit meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev to raise the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Rifkind: President Reagan and other members of the US Administration have said that human rights matters will be on the summit agenda.

Anglo-American Relations

66. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution he expects the Treasure Houses of Britain exhibition to make to Anglo-American relations.

Mr. Eggar: I should expect the exhibition, as a major cultural manifestation strongly supported by both countries, to make a significant and valuable contribution to Anglo-American relations.

Those who have sent objects, as well as the organisers, should be congratulated. Both Governments have given it their full support. The exhibition can be seen as part of the United Kingdom's general promotion in the United States which also demonstrates our contemporary industrial and technological strength.

The visit of their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales has excited considerable enthusiasm which can only be of benefit to Anglo-American relations.

Moscow

67. **Mr. Temple-Morris** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to seek to visit Moscow.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to do so.

President Reagan-Mr. Gorbachev (Meeting)

70. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to meet the United States Secretary of State to discuss the outcome of the summit meeting between President Reagan and Mr. Gorbachev.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I will attend the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Brussels on 21 November when the President of the United States, accompanied by Secretary Shultz, will discuss with other Alliance leaders the outcome of his meeting with Mr. Gorbachev.

Soviet Foreign Minister

71. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to meet the Soviet Foreign Minister.

Mr. Rifkind: My right hon. and learned Friend met Mr. Shevardnadze in Helsinki in August and in New York in September. He has invited him to pay a visit to the United Kingdom; dates have not yet been agreed.

77. **Mr. Lawrence** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Soviet Foreign Minister on the importance of existing international obligations being honoured before new obligations are entered upon.

Mr. Rifkind: In his speech to the meeting held to mark the tenth anniversary of the Helsinki final act, my right hon. and learned Friend made clear our concern at Eastern failure to live up to their existing conference on security and co-operation in Europe commitments on human rights and that we would keep this issue firmly on the East-West agenda. Similarly in the field of arms control, we have

stressed the need for strict fulfilment by all parties of their obligations under the provisions of arms control agreements.

80. **Mr. Woodall** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in view of the top level contacts now being made by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America, he will seek to impress upon the Soviet Foreign Minister the importance of complying with the human rights obligations under the Helsinki final act.

Mr. Rifkind: We have consistently made clear in our contacts with the Soviet leadership that we expect them fully to comply with the human rights provisions contained in the Helsinki and Madrid documents. We shall continue to do so. The United States Administration have already raised human rights issues with Mr. Shevardnadze and President Reagan has said he will do so when he meets Mr. Gorbachev in Geneva.

Palestine

72. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement with regard to the Government's policy with regard to Palestine.

Mr. Renton: We support all constructive moves by the parties towards a balanced negotiated settlement which provides for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and for Israel's right to exist within secure and recognised borders.

Namibia

76. **Mr. McCartney** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 566 on Namibia.

Mr. Rifkind: We abstained on this resolution and are not involved in its implementation.

Jordanian-Palestinian Delegation

82. **Mrs. Renee Short** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost to Her Majesty's Government of the aborted joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to London.

Mr. Renton: Approximately £3,600.

Portugal

83. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking through the Council of Ministers to ensure that Portugal receives substantial financial and economic assistance through the European Community after accession.

Mr. Rifkind: The financial arrangements agreed with Portugal during the enlargement negotiations reflected the Community's intention that she should be a modest net beneficiary from the Community's budget. The precise extent to which she is able to benefit from Community membership will also depend on her ability to take advantage of Community financial mechanisms such as the structural funds.

Nicaragua

85. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will represent to the Government of the United States of America that the trade embargo on Nicaragua should be lifted.

Mr. Eggar: The United States Government are well aware of our views on this matter.

British Embassy, Moscow

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the number of Soviet citizens employed in the British embassy and residences in Moscow.

Mr. Eggar: There are 79 Soviet citizens employed in the British embassy and residences in Moscow. Of these, 66 are direct employees of the embassy with 7 of them employed in the ambassador's residence; a further 10 are in the houses of other United Kingdom-based staff, and 3 are part-time cleaners.

Soviet Embassy, London

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to how many United Kingdom citizens are employed in the Soviet embassy and residences in London.

Mr. Eggar: So far as we are aware, no United Kingdom citizens are employed at the Soviet embassy or at the residences of members of the staff of the embassy.

United Nations

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give a breakdown of Her Majesty's Government's assessed and voluntary contributions to the United Nations and its agencies in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom made the following assessed contribution to the United Nations and its agencies in 1984:

Organisation	*£ sterling*
United Nations Regular Budget	21,744,474
Food and Agriculture Organisation	8,152,459
World Health Organisation	7,484,000
International Labour Organisation	4,059,000
International Atomic Energy Authority	2,471,000
International Telecommunication Union	1,637,250
Universal Postal Union	1,023,800
International Civil Aviation Organisation	940,390
World Metrological Organisation	930,039
World Intellectual Property Organisation	357,601
International Maritime Organisation	335,398
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation	324,246
International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property	56,000
Permanent Court of Arbitration	8,755
Commission on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	5,456

The United Kingdom also made the following voluntary contibutions in 1984:

Organisation	*£ sterling*
United Nations Peacekeeping	23,811,837
United Nations Development Programme	20,000,000

Organisation	£ sterling
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	13,225,000
United Nations Childrens Fund	6,000,000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	5,000,000
United Nations Border Relief Organisation	5,000,000
International Fund for Agricultural Development	4,242,000
World Health Organisation Programmes	3,406,700
General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades	1,246,694
World Food Programme	1,000,000
International Atomic Energy Authority Technical Assistance	783,000
United Nations Environment Programme	750,000
United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control	700,000
United Nations Industrial Development Organisation	300,000
United Nations Educational and Training Programme for South Africa	50,000
United Nations Decade for Women	50,000
International Telecommunications Union	50,000
World Metreological Organisation Voluntary Co-operation Fund	20,000
United Nations Victims of Torture	10,000
Polish Refugees in Lebanon	4,000

The bulk of these contributions is found from the votes of Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Overseas Development Administration. But significant contributions are also made by other departments as appropriate. The normal cost of membership of UNESCO is about £5 million per annum. The cost was reduced in 1984 by refunds from previous years due to currency fluctuation.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money the British Government have contributed towards the United Nations Year of Peace; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We are among the large majority of United Nations states which have not contributed to the United Nations voluntary fund established to finance commemorative activities in New York. We intend to mark the International Year of Peace by organising a conference on peace-keeping, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. The cost of this is likely to be £5,500.

Our view is that members of the United Nations can most effectively demonstrate their commitment to the aims of the International Year of Peace by pursuing policies which genuinely further peace and through practical support for efforts to maintain peace in areas of potential conflict, for example by contributing to international peace-keeping forces.

Israel (Torture Allegations)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with the Israeli Government allegations of torture of Palestinians by Israelis on the West Bank.

Mr. Renton: I do not know what allegations my hon. Friend has in mind. We keep in close touch with the Israeli authorities about human rights in the occupied territories. They are well aware of our views.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Pornography

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures the Government are taking in Northern Ireland to seek to prevent the spread of pornography; what representations he has received on this matter in the last 12 months; and whether the Government are contemplating any changes to the present law on pornography in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I believe that present provisions are adequate to control pornography in Northern Ireland and therefore have no plans to take additional preventative measures through changes in the existing law. During the past 12 months I have not received any representations identifying a significant problem in this field.

Library Books

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what are the amounts of expenditure by education and library boards on library books for each year from 1975 to 1984 inclusive;

(2) what are the amounts of expenditure by education and library boards on library books per head of population for each year from 1975 to 1984 inclusive.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Financial Year	£ 000 Board Expenditure	Per Capita Expenditure
1975-76	1,861	1·21
1976-77	2,218	1·44
1977-78	2,797	1·82
1978-79	3,078	2·00
1979-80	2,762	1·79
1980-81	2,625	1·70
1981-82	2,268	1·45
1982-83	1,880	1·20
1983-84	2,154	1·37
1984-85	2,176	1·38

Armagh Prison

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches have been performed in Armagh prison in each quarter since strip searching was introduced.

Mr. Tom King: Prisoners admitted to Armagh prison have always undergone a full reception search. Records have only been maintained since 5 November 1982. The information available is as follows:

Quarter ending	1982	1983	1984	1985
31 March		*517	88	*145
30 June		*290	99	*169
30 September		*269	66	74
31 December	400	142	102	—

* These figures include searches carried out on life sentence prisoners —two in 1983 and one in 1985—engaged in prerelease working-out programmes who each entered and left the prison more than 50 times each month. The prisoner engaged in the programme in 1985 was given the option of being located in an area of the prison which would have removed the need for her to be searched but she chose to remain located with other prisoners.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many women have been held on remand in Armagh prison in each quarter since strip searching was introduced.

Mr. Tom King: The details requested are set out in the following table.

Quarter ending	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
March	—	14	7	13
June	—	15	9	6
September	—	11	10	8
December	16	8	8	—

Notes

1. The above figures, which relate to the last Sunday in each quarter, include women on remand or awaiting trial, and those detained in the young offenders centre.

2. Prisoners admitted to Armagh prison for the first time have always undergone a full reception search. In November 1982 it was decided to implement this type of search for all admissions to and discharges from the prison including attendance at court hearings. Since March 1983 prisoners attending court for remand hearings or for trial are strip-searched on a random basis only.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Foster Parents (Payments)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to require regular returns to be made to his Department by local authorities on payments made to foster parents of severely handicapped children.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. Local authorities already provide regular returns of the annual expenditure incurred on boarded out children, but this does not differentiate between the handicapped child and others and I do not think the additional burden of having to provide information specifically on payments made to foster parents of severely handicapped children could be justified.

New Cross Hospital (Cancer Unit)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has reached a decision on the proposed closure of the Hedley Atkins breast cancer unit at New Cross hospital.

Mr. Whitney: We have not received any proposal to close this unit.

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Major: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the Library.

Benefit and other files in central and local offices are available to all staff needing access to them for the efficient conduct of business. Security is enforced by physical and technical barriers, and members of staff are not allowed access to their own benefit, medical or personnel records nor, where known, to those of relatives or friends, but no centralised or local access record is maintained.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision is made to provide disability allowances for people who become handicapped after reaching pensionable age.

Mr. Newton: Disability benefits available to someone who becomes handicapped after pensionable age include attendance allowance, if he or she requires frequent or prolonged attention from others, and industrial disablement benefit, if the disability is the result of an accident at work or a prescribed industrial disease. Women may be entitled to mobility allowance if they become unable, or virtually unable, to walk before they reach age 65. The supplementary benefit scheme has provision for certain additional needs of handicapped claimants to be taken into account in calculating their entitlement.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the upper age limit for people desirous of claiming an attendance allowance.

Mr. Newton: There is no upper age limit for claiming or receiving attendance allowance.

Benefits

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many pensioner householders he estimates are receiving supplementary benefit additional requirements for service charges and ground rent paid by leaseholders; and what is the average amount of additional requirement paid for this purpose;

(2) how many pensioners living in special leasehold housing schemes for the elderly receive supplementary benefit or housing benefit.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Nurses' Accommodation (Disposal)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive proposals from regional health authorities in connection with the disposal of accommodation at present occupied by nurses.

Mr. Hayhoe: By 31 December 1985.

Community Care

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he is in a position to publish the Government's response to the Social Services Committee report on community care with special reference to adult mentally ill and mentally handicapped people.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government response is published today (Cmnd. 9674). We welcome the support given by

the Committee, and the overwhelming majority of those who gave evidence, to community care as a philosophy and as a practicable proposition. The response confirms the priority we attach to the development of an integrated network of mainly local services capable of supporting meaningful community living and of meeting special needs. Changes in role, contraction or closure of large hospitals must be accompanied by the development of alternative services. Although much has been and is being achieved, much remains to be done; and all those concerned have a responsibility for making the most of available resources to develop a comprehensive range of local residential and other support services to meet the needs of individual mentally ill and mentally handicapped people.

Health Authorities

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what consideration he has given to the information sent to him by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, concerning the resource and manpower implications for health authorities in England and Wales of the Education Act 1981; what action he has taken or will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The information provided by the right hon. Member is a paper about the implications of the Education Act 1981, sent to officials in June 1985 by the National Association of Health Authorities in England and Wales (NAHA) following a meeting in October 1984. Detailed comments were sent to the authors in September 1985 with the offer of a further meeting.

We are aware that in places the introduction of the new procedures has presented problems to health authorities and identified a need for services that are not always immediately available. We have made clear that no additional resources can be made available to health authorities specifically related to the implementation of the Act, although as the right hon. Member is aware my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has allocated some additional resources to assist with specific aspects of special education. Solutions to the problems must be found locally by the authorities working together to set up practical procedures and find the most effective way of using resources. The NAHA paper was intended to help this process.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what finance he intends to offer to health authorities for the financial year 1986-87 to enable them to honour the doctors' and nurses' pay awards and to meet rates of inflation.

Mr. Hayhoe: We are increasing current spending on the hospital and community health service by £650 million (6·7 per cent.) in 1986-87 compared with a forecast increase in general inflation of 4·5 per cent. Authorities will also have available their growing cost improvement programme. From within these resources authorities will be expected to meet pay and price increases, including the full year effects of the 1985 review body awards, and develop services.

Drugs

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many drugs have been referred to the advisory committee on National Health Service drugs; by whom; and which drugs are currently under consideration.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs receives representations from the pharmaceutical industry and medical profession. Some of the information is supplied to the committee on a confidential basis. The committee will be keeping under review all drugs in the therapeutic categories covered by the selected list scheme.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many wards have been closed down in hospitals in the Inner and Greater London areas and the West Midlands region in each year since 1979; and which hospitals have been affected by these closures during the same period.

Mr. Whitney: We collect information only about closures which are both permanent and sufficiently significant to require formal consultation procedures to be used. Ward closures are not separately identifiable.

Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases have been won against his Department by *(a)* pensioners and *(b)* unemployment or supplementary benefit claimants at social security appeal tribunals in each year since 1979.

Mr. Major: The available information is provided in the tables. Statistics on appeals are analysed in respect of the various social security benefits rather than client groups.

Social security appeals in Great Britain 1979 to 1984 on decisions for retirement pension, unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit

1. Retirement pension

Year	*Number of appeals/ references lodged**	*Number of appeals/ references heard†*	*Number where the claimant was successful*	*Proportion of appeals heard where the claimant was successful per cent.*
1979	n/a	537	106	19·7
1980	n/a	672	128	19·0
1981	n/a	769	165	21·5
1982	n/a	896	192	21·4
1983	n/a	900	219	24·3

Year	Number of appeals/ references lodged*	Number of appeals/ references heard†	Number where the claimant was successful	Proportion of appeals heard where the claimant was successful per cent.
1984				
Quarter ending 31 March 1984	n/a	236	46	19·5
Quarter ending 30 June 1984	453	154	16	10·4
Quarter ending 30 September 1984‡	420	204	50	24·5

2. Unemployment benefit

Year	Number of appeals/ references lodged*	Number of appeals/ references heard†	Number where the claimant was successful	Proportion of appeals heard where the claimant was successful per cent.
1979	n/a	17,112	2,938	17·2
1980	n/a	17,094	3,022	17·7
1981	n/a	17,964	3,426	19·1
1982	n/a	16,433	3,404	20·7
1983	n/a	16,449	3,295	20·0
1984				
Quarter ending 31 March 1984	n/a	4,959	1,066	21·5
Quarter ending 30 June 1984	10,961	4,095	812	19·8
Quarter ending 30 September 1984‡	13,801	4,572	950	20·8

3. Supplementary benefit

Year	Number of appeals/ references lodged*	Number of appeals/ references heard†	Number where the claimant was successful	Proportion of appeals heard where the claimant was successful per cent.
1979	94,178	50,639	10,840	21·4
1980	94,481	49,355	10,914	22·1
1981	108,570	49,864	8,862	17·8
1982	129,909	56,084	10,195	18·2
1983	142,779	60,567	11,828	19·5
1984				
Quarter ending 31 March 1984	37,721	16,871	3,314	19·6
Quarter ending 30 June 1984	52,010	16,350	3,024	18·5
Quarter ending 30 September 1984‡	61,872	17,004	3,482	20·5

* Figures not recorded prior to April 1984.
† Not all appeals lodged are heard. Some are superseded by revised initial decisions, some are withdrawn by the appellant, some are not admitted by the tribunal.
‡ Figures not yet available for period subsequent to September 1984.

NHS Hospitals (Private Patients)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many beds in National Health Service hospitals were paid for by private patients; what was the total revenue collected each year since 1979; and what proportion of the patients were admitted for *(a)* urgent operations and *(b)* non-urgent operations.

Mr. Hayhoe: The available information is given in the table. A classification of hospital patients by degree of urgency of operation is not available centrally.

Private patients in NHS Hospitals — *England*

	Average number of beds occupied daily	In-patient cases	Total income in £ millions*
1979	1,508	91,128	33·3
1980	1,514	98,565	42·6
1981	1,469	97,739	49·3
1982	1,259	80,686	46·2
1983	1,253	82,938	49·5
1984†	1,156	77,489	48·7

* Income figures relate to financial years.
† Provisional figures.

Disabled Persons (Discrimination)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many cases of discrimination against disabled people have been referred to his Department in the past six months; what action he is taking; if Her Majesty's Government will be reviewing their position on anti-discrimination legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: In the last six months, one individual complaint about alleged discrimination against a disabled person has been referred to the Department for investigation. As the case arose in Wales, it was passed on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I understand a reply has been sent by his Department. The Government remain unconvinced of the case for general anti-discrimination legislation. In our view a better approach is to identify the practical difficulties which disabled people face and to try to overcome them, whether through legislative means or otherwise.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Baldry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals Her Majesty's Government are making to reform the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jopling: We shall continue to press for a more market-oriented price policy as a central feature of measures to improve the CAP. This is the best way of containing the costs of the CAP and of attaining a better market balance of supply and demand. At the same time we shall press for application of the financial guideline for agriculture. We shall also insist that Community measures do not discriminate unfairly against the United Kingdom.

Farmers (Adverse Weather Compensation)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he proposes for the relief of farmers who have suffered from adverse weather conditions.

Mr. Jopling: The Government intend to provide aid for those livestock farmers who have been worst affected by the weather and I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Sea Defences and Land Drainage

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations which submitted comments on the Green Paper on land drainage; how many of these express the opinion that the sea defences of the United Kingdom coastline should be a national responsibility; and if he will make a statement on future policy in this area in the light of the opinions submitted.

Mrs. Fenner: The organisations and individuals who submitted comments on the Green Paper are listed below. Thirty-two of these submissions (19 per cent.) expressed the opinion that sea defences and other coastal works should be treated as a national responsibility. The comments are still under consideration and no decisions on future policy have as yet been made.

Comments submitted by:

Alford drainage board
Allerdale district council
Anglian water authority
Anglian water authority (regional land drainage committee)
Anglian water authority (Great Ouse local land drainage committee)
Anglian water authority (Oundle division local land drainage committee)
Association of British Insurers
Association of Chief Technical Officers
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils (London branch)
Association of District Councils (North Yorkshire branch)
Association of Drainage Authorities (River Ouse branch)
Association of Drainage Authorities (HQ)
Association of Metropolitan District Engineers
Barrow in Furness borough council
Basingstoke and Deane borough council
Beverley borough council
Black Sluice internal drainage board
Boothferry borough council
Borough Engineers Society
Boston borough council
Brecon Beacons national park
Brighton borough council
British Ports Association
British Resorts Association
British Waterways Board
Broads Authority (Norfolk and Suffolk)
Calderdale metropolitan borough council
Caldicott and Wentlooge Levels internal drainage board
Canterbury city council
Central Electricity Generating Board
Claro internal drainage board
Cod Beck internal drainage board
Confederation of British Industry
Construction Industry, Research and Information Association
Copeland borough council
Cotswold district council
Council for Protection of Rural England
Councillor D. Longden (South Glamorgan)
Country Landowners Association
Countryside Commission
The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
Dearne and Dove internal drainage board
C. H. Dobbie and Partners
Dudley metropolitan borough council
Dun Drainage Commissioners
Dyfed Confederation of Women's Institute
Dyfed county council
Easington district council
Eastleigh borough council
Erewash borough council
Essex county council
Everton internal drainage board
Farmers Union of Wales
Nigel Finch
Forest of Dean district council
Garthorpe internal drainage board
Gedling borough council
Glanford borough council
Greater London council
Hampshire county council
Hart district council
Hastings borough council
Havant borough council
Havering borough council
J. P. Hitchenor
Mr. J. Holdstock
The House Builders Federation
N. C. F. Howell
Institute of Biology
Institute of Oceanographic Science
Institution of Civil Engineers
Institution of Civil Engineers (Association of Municipal Engineers)
Institution of Professional Civil Servants
Institution of Water Engineers and Scientists
Isle of Anglesey borough council
Kent Technical Officers Association
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk borough council
Laneham internal drainage board
Leicester city council
Leominster district council
Lewis and Duvivier (consulting engineers)
Liverpool city council
Louth Internal drainage board
Lower Medway internal drainage board
Lower Wye internal drainage board
Ludham parish council
Messingham internal drainage board
Merton London borough council
Mid Bedfordshire district council
Midlands and Western regional panel (MAFF)
L. J. A. Munro
National Anglers Council
National Association of Land Drainage Committees
National and Local Government Officers Association
National Farmers Union
National Farmers Union (Wales)
National Trust

Nature Conservancy Council
New Forest district council
Nicholson Cadge and Gilbert, Solicitors
Norfolk county council
Northavon district council
North Dorset district council
North Tyneside metropolitan district council
Northumbrian water authority (regional land drainage committee)
North Wales Provincial Councils for Local Authority Services
North West water authority
Newark Area internal drainage board
Portsmouth city council
Powysland internal drainage board
Preseli district council
Councillor D. Pye (Cambridgeshire)
Ramsey 4th internal drainage board
River Lugg internal drainage board
Royal Society for Nature Conservation
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Rushcliffe borough council
Scarborough borough council
Severn Trent water authority
Sheffield metropolitan district council
Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council
Shropshire county council
Solent Protection Society
Somerset county council
Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation
Southern water authority
Southern water authority (local land drainage committee)
South Derbyshire district council
South Glamorgan county council
Southampton civic centre
South Holland district council
South Holland internal drainage board
South Norfolk district council
South Somerset district council
South West water authority
South West water authority (regional land drainage committee)
South Yorkshire county council
Staffordshire county council
Strine internal drainage board
Suffolk coastal district council
Swale borough council
Thames water authority (and regional land drainage committee)
Tickhill drainage board
Tonbridge and Malling borough council
Peter Tyas
Wakefield City metropolitan borough council
Warwickshire county council
Neville Waters (Usk local land drainage committee)
Welland and Deepings internal drainage board
Welsh Anglers Council
Welsh Counties Committee
Welsh water authority
Went internal drainage board
Wessex water authority
Wessex water authority (regional land drainage committee)
West Devon borough council
West Dorset district council
West Oxfordshire district council
West Yorkshire metropolitan county council
Wight coastal protection society
Wirral metropolitan borough council
Witham Third internal drainage board
Wokingham district council
Worthing borough council
Wyre Forest district council
Water Authorities Association
Yorkshire Water Authority (and regional land drainage committee)
York city council

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he proposes to take in respect of United Kingdom sea defences and land drainage under the grant-aiding powers currently available.

Mrs. Fenner: Our powers under the Land Drainage Act 1976 to grant aid land drainage and sea defence capital works are permissive. It is for drainage authorities to put forward schemes that can be considered for grant. The financing and administration of sea defence and land drainage is currently under review following the publication of our Green Paper last March.

Pesticides

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list those substances known to occur in pesticide products as contaminants which have, or are believed to have, some form of biological activity, or whose principal metabolites fall into this category; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list, for each chemical approved for use as a pesticide, contaminants arising in the course of manufacture of the biologically-active element which themselves have, or are believed to have, some form of biological activity, or whose principal metabolites fall into this category; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However I can assure the hon. Member that all biological activity of pesticides is evaluated, whether arising from the active ingredient, other components of the formulation or likely contaminants.

Home-Grown Cereals Authority and Meat and Livestock Commission (Membership)

Mr. Hardy asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names and, where appropriate, the other occupations of the members of *(a)* the Home-Grown Cereals Authority and *(b)* the Meat and Livestock Commission.

Mr. Gummer: The names and other occupations of the members of the Home-Grown Cereals Authority and the Meat and Livestock Commission are as follows:

Home-Grown Cereals Authority

Independent members	*Other occupations*
Chairman of the authority—Austen Laing CBE	—
Deputy chairman—Professor Gordon Ross Dickson	Professor of agriculture University of Newcastle upon Tyne
Professor D. K. Britton CBE, MA, BSc(Econ)	(Emeritus professor of agricultural economics, University of London)
Members representing growers of home-grown cereals	
L. J. Atkinson	Farmer
R. J. Cherrington	Farmer
M. E. Garrod	Farmer
J. Gwyn Griffiths OBE, JP	Farmer
A. W. Hayward	Farmer
J. McKee	Farmer
J. Main	Farmer
J. S. Moor	Farmer
H. S. Sharpley	Farmer

Independent members	*Other occupations*
Members representing dealers and processors of home-grown cereals	
K. S. Bruce	Farmer and managing director and chairman of Wyatt and Bruce
B. Grant	Grain manager, North Eastern Farmers Ltd
O. P. Hudson	Commercial director, Pauls PLC
T. A. A. Macpherson	Managing director, Associated British Maltsters and chief executive, Dalgety UK Malt Div
H. D. P. Rankin JP	Director, Allied Mills Ltd
B. C. Read CBE, JP	Executive chairman, R. J. Read (Holding) Ltd
B. McC. Rutherford	(Recently retired from the post of chief buyer, BOCM Silcock Ltd)
R. G. B. Wood	Managing director, Dower Wood and Co. Ltd
L. J. Wright	Director, Pauls and Whites Food Ltd and Pauls and Saunders Ltd
MEAT AND LIVESTOCK COMMISSION	
Chairman	
K. E. Roberts OBE, JP	Farmer
Members	
R. N. Buttini CBE (also chairman of the consumer committee)	None
C. D. Bulmer	Chief executive, Hillsdown Holdings PLC, FMC PLC
A. W. Clift OBE	Managing director, S & A Clift (Birmingham) Ltd
N. J. Fiske	Farmer
J. Forbes JP	Farmer and farms director, Moray Estates Development Co.
M. S. Hughes	Departmental director, J. Sainsbury PLC and director, J. Sainsbury (Farms) Ltd, Breckland Farms Ltd
J. F. Royan	Retail butcher
G. Wilyman OBE	Farmer

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Andrew Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers' meeting held in Brussels on 18 and 19 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: With my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, I represented the United Kingdom at the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers in Brussels on 18 and 19 November 1985.

The Council had a first exchange of views on the latest Commission ideas for adjusting the cereal regime. These will now be discussed in detail by a group of senior officials. The Commission intends to present its proposals for discussion by the Council in December.

There was further discussion of the Commission's proposals for sugar for the next five years, for sugar for the chemical industry and for amending the starch regime. No decisions were reached.

The Council discussed a proposal for extending the payment of annual premium at 80 per cent. of the full rate to goats in certain regions and to shearling ewes of the Herdwick breed in the Lake District. I made it clear that this latter arrangement should apply to certain other slower maturing breeds in the Lake District and in certain areas of Scotland. The Commissioner was not prepared to amend the proposal, and the President decided to consult the acceding countries on that basis to press for the additional coverage.

The Council discussed again arrangements for minimum standards for hens in battery cages. It was not possible to reach conclusions and the Council will come back to this in December.

On hormones, the Commission presented a proposal for banning the use of three natural and two synthetic hormones as growth promoters in cattle. The Commission explained that this proposal was in line with the opinion recently expressed by the European Council. I argued that it was a mistake to take decisions without regard to scientific evidence and drew attention to the problems of control and of trade with third countries. The proposal will be examined in detail by officials before further discussion in the Council.

ENVIRONMENT

South Africa (Rugby Matches)

87. **Mr. Ron Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are being taken to seek to ensure that the planned Rugby Union matches between a South African side and the British Lions do not take place.

Mr. Tracey: I have already made clear to the president and secretary of the English RFU the Government's opposition to the tour. The Government will continue to do everything possible to persuade British rugby, whose responsibility the decision is, to reject the South African invitation. In line with Government policy, the Sports Council does not make funds available to support sporting contacts with South Africa.

Renovation Grants

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the total number and amounts of renovation grants paid to *(a)* private landlords and *(b)* private tenants in (i) England, (ii) Wales and (iii) London in each calendar year since 1980 by type of grant;

(2) if he will list the total number and amount of special grants paid to private landlords in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* London in each calendar year since 1969.

Sir George Young: The available estimated figures are as follows:

Renovation grants paid: by type of grant and type of recipient

	Number of dwellings				*Amount (£ thousand)*	
	Private owners		*Tenants*			
	Owner occupiers	*Land-lords & HA's*	*Private sector*	*Public sector*	*Private owners*	*Tenants*
	Conversion and improvement grants					
(i) *England*						
1980	56,250	9,370	190	10	120,412	420
1981	41,410	7,360	340	30	118,363	898
1982	45,870	8,320	260	280	184,621	1,246
1983	66,440	10,890	470	1,730	314,062	4,650
1984	66,800	12,610	680	3,870	397,091	16,749
(ii) *London*						
1980	7,840	1,570	20	—	14,642	48

	Number of dwellings				Amount (£ thousand)	
	Private owners		Tenants			
	Owner occupiers	Land-lords & HA's	Private sector	Public sector	Private owners	Tenants
1981	5,300	1,340	60	—	15,196	145
1982	4,550	1,240	30	10	22,139	92
1983	5,590	1,220	80	50	31,531	685
1984	7,160	1,850	70	60	53,928	381
(iii) *Wales*						
1982	4,620	210	220	—	14,864	924
1983	6,670	300	260	—	26,392	1,417
1984	7,540	420	320	60	39,459	1,905
Intermediate grants						
(i) *England*						
1980	6,530	1,490	20	—	5,994	23
1981	11,550	2,400	230	120	21,030	412
1982	15,330	3,310	280	360	38,381	720
1983	19,870	4,540	370	870	59,260	1,435
1984	20,700	4,960	410	880	73,754	1,935
(ii) *London*						
1980	680	240	—	—	726	—
1981	1,440	350	50	40	3,348	124
1982	2,160	530	70	90	6,656	205
1983	3,050	730	70	260	10,991	411
1984	3,040	880	60	210	13,413	512
(iii) *Wales*						
1982	1,110	40	40	—	2,352	97
1983	1,550	40	60	—	4,227	169
1984	2,420	80	80	10	6,925	276
Repair grants						
England						
1980	500	10	—	—	375	—
1981	4,410	620	20	—	6,711	29
1982	25,400	3,140	150	—	53,824	359
1983	103,290	9,310	460	10	270,059	1,266
1984	102,530	13,200	380	40	339,925	1,999
(ii) *London*						
1980	70	—	—	—	82	—
1981	510	150	—	—	969	820
1982	2,850	760	90	—	8,673	242
1983	13,270	2,060	150	10	45,068	417
1984	25,030	3,520	60	—	101,379	218
(iii) *Wales*						
1982	4,630	40	40	—	7,857	80
1983	18,070	130	200	—	40,169	899
1984	18,240	470	290	—	52,025	914

Special grants to owners of houses in multiple occupation

	Number of houses			Amount (£ thousand)		
	England	London	Wales	England	London	Wales
1973	320	190	NA	56	26	NA
1974	260	160	NA	55	25	NA
1975	380	110	NA	159	17	NA
1976	200	130	NA	50	25	NA
1977	320	200	NA	60	27	NA
1978	120	80	NA	44	30	NA
1979	120	60	NA	46	20	NA
1980	110	50	NA	79	25	NA
1981	440	220	NA	708	338	NA
1982	1,320	620	10	3,007	1,369	2
1983	1,590	730	—	4,758	2,187	—
1984	2,040	1,060	10	7,930	4,447	14

Notes: Figures include estimates of missing returns: numbers of grants are rounded to the nearest 10.
NA Information not available.
— Fewer than 5 grants paid in the year.

EC Grants (Textiles)

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which parts of west Yorkshire have been allocated grants from the EEC fund for areas of textile closure; and what is the amount of each such grant.

Mr. Tracey: The details of ERDF non-quota textile grants offered in west Yorkshire to date are as follows:

Authority	*Scheme*	*Amount (£)*
Calderdale MBC	Sowerby bridge stone cleaning programme	15,000
	Boneyard reclamation works	8,500
	Halifax employment action area	91,750
	Rochdale canal environmental and access improvements	121,116
Kirklees MBC	Moorlands small business centre	177,500
	Enterprise centre, Scout hill	240,000
	Mill Street industrial regeneration area	11,425
	Milnsbridge environmental enhancement programme (Phase I)	7,500
	Industrial regeneration areas	56,118
	Kirklees development grant 1985 bid	37,500
West Yorkshire CC	George street improvements Milnsbridge	70,785
	Emphasis county workshops, Dewsbury	102,400
	Clifton road county workshops, Brighouse	5,050
	Macpelah works, Hebden bridge	3,800
	Ossett workshops	4,400
	Hawcliffe works, Oxenhope	2,613
	Raistrick's scrapyard, Bradford	2,338
	Dockfield road access, Shipley	8,250
	Butterfields Industrial estate, Shipley	4,950
	Becks Road improvement Keighley	22,385
	Lower Sunnybank mill, Meltham	4,125
	Providence works, Batley	5,500
	Marsden Goods yard industrial workshops units	99,275
	Gresley road, Keighley	16,500
	Parkwood street access, Keighley	5,680

Authority	Scheme	Amount (£)
	Walton street improvement, Sowerby bridge	19,360
	Hangingroyd mill, Hebden bridge	12,555
Pennie Heritage	Nutclough mill phase A	91,150
	Total grant offered	1,247,525

Rating Reform

Sir Peter Emery asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in view of the number of specific inquiries into rating reform, he will publish a White Paper, rather than a further discussion document, setting out the Government's intention, on rate reform with a view to legislation being introduced during the next Session of Parliament.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend's studies encompass the whole of local government finance. The document which he intends to publish will cover other issues in addition to rate reform, and full consultation will be appropriate on these matters.

Housing Programme Allocation

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to grant the extra housing programme allocation only to local authorities which undertake not to insist on onerous contractual conditions for private contractors in order to benefit their own direct labour organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Whilst I entirely share my hon. Friend's criticism of discriminatory contract conditions which is implied in his question, this is not a factor which it would be appropriate to take into account in making any allocations to local authorities.

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the likely impact of the current negotiations on teachers' pay on the anticipated level of domestic rates for the forthcoming year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The impact on expenditure of the 1985-86 teachers' pay settlement will depend upon its final level. The effect on rates will vary between local education authorities according to their circumstances and the steps they take to make off-setting savings.

Housing Standards

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report* for each English housing authority *(a)* the numbers of unfit dwellings, *(b)* the numbers of dwellings fit but lacking basic amenities and *(c)* the numbers of non-standard dwellings in need of renovation, indicating in each case the percentage of total stock affected; and if the number is higher or lower than at the same date in 1984.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities' housing investment programme returns for 1984 and 1985 included their estimates of defective dwellings in their areas at 1 April each year. Numbers reported are not necessarily comparable as authorities' criteria may differ and in total they are not consistent with estimates from the English house condition survey of 1981. The figures requested are as follows:

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: North (Exc. Cumbria)

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Tyne & Wear										
Gateshead	86,400	2,314	2·7	23·5	1,515	1·8	0·9	25,190	29·2	92·5
Newcastle upon Tyne	114,983	6,482	5·6	214·4	168	0·1	−13·0	24,943	21·7	−16·7
North Tyneside	82,334	186	0·2	−7·5	1,190	1·4	−18·9	38,384	46·6	14·8
South Tyneside	63,824	842	1·3	106·4	618	1·0	−36·0	14,357	22·5	162·6
Sunderland	114,989	2,368	2·1	543·5	2,949	2·6	−3·3	32,151	28·0	30·8
Cleveland										
Hartlepool	34,754	1,144	3·3	−1·9	1,322	3·8	−14·9	10,502	30·2	41·7
Langbaurgh	57,030	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Middlesbrough	54,870	155	0·3	9·2	943	1·7	−13·9	22,076	40·2	441·2
Stockton-on-Tees	66,667	615	0·9	−8·3	1,401	2·1	−9·0	7,156	10·7	−1·5
Durham										
Chester−Le−Street	20,405	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Darlington	38,764	206	0·5	−12·7	1,976	5·1	−36·9	4,581	11·8	47·5
Derwentside	35,367	410	1·2	22·4	712	2·0	−27·1	6,215	17·6	12·7
Durham	32,501	1,186	3·6	0·6	1,540	4·7	−8·8	6,916	21·3	1·6
Easington	39,546	1	0·0	−98·4	851	2·2	−11·1	9,965	25·2	−15·2
Sedgefield	35,689	5	0·0	0·0	568	1·6	−2·4	17,800	49·9	55·6
Teesdale	9,925	87	0·9	−6·5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wear Valley	26,546	402	1·5	−9·9	138	0·5	−43·9	1,603	6·0	55·8
Northumberland										
Alnwick	12,359	248	2·0	55·0	790	6·4	−5·4	1,747	14·1	49·7
Berwick-upon-Tweed	12,142	185	1·5	−3·1	176	1·4	−2·2	894	7·4	23·3
Blyth Valley	30,100	700	2·3	−7·2	1,070	3·6	−2·4	5,403	18·0	6·6

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Castle Morpeth	18,803	24	0·1	−4·0	535	2·8	−6·5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tynedale	22,733	355	1·6	0·3	637	2·8	−4·5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wansbeck	24,989	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

N/A = Figures not available OR C/O change not calculable because 1984 figures not available.

Region: Yorks and Humberside — *Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985*

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
South Yorkshire										
Barnsley	85,688	7,118	8·3	9·1	2,440	2·8	−8·4	22,925	26·7	57·4
Doncaster	110,397	700	0·6	−3·4	6,812	6·2	−7·3	10,301	9·3	39·2
Rotherham	96,066	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sheffield	216,879	14,642	6·8	19·7	3,863	1·8	−10·5	106,375	49·0	50·2
West Yorkshire										
Bradford	175,110	2,793	1·6	51·4	1,403	0·8	−28·4	19,838	11·3	152·8
Calderdale	77,00	250	0·3	−21·9	1,150	1·5	−11·5	13,798	17·9	53·5
Kirklees	150,342	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Leeds	284,100	27,084	9·5	N/A	2,637	0·9	−5·7	93,722	33·0	6·6
Wakefield	119,584	254	0·2	57·8	2,909	2·4	−9·5	41,277	34·5	26·8
Humberside										
Boothferry	24,082	18	0·1	−74·3	1,130	4·7	135·4	1,067	4·4	−23·8
Cleethorpes	26,303	2,250	8·6	739·6	400	1·5	−82·0	8,000	30·4	471·4
East Yorkshire	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Glanford	26,257	131	0·5	−11·5	527	2·0	−6·2	346	1·3	−49·7
Great Grimsby	34,628	2,217	6·4	0·0	710	2·1	−5·6	3,723	10·8	−0·6
Holderness	18,870	151	0·8	−16·6	100	0·5	−4·8	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kingston Upon Hull	105,000	7,030	6·7	10·9	3,945	3·8	−16·2	22,423	21·4	−0·7
Scunthorpe	24,867	230	0·9	−9·4	1,141	4·6	−6·6	8,569	34·5	18·6
The E. Yorks Bgh. of Beverley	41,643	105	0·3	−0·9	692	1·7	−2·8	2,340	5·6	−3·3
North Yorkshire										
Craven	19,770	105	0·5	−11·0	180	0·9	−29·1	1,090	5·5	101·1
Hambleton	29,493	94	0·3	−3·1	958	3·2	−4·7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Harrogate	55,148	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Richmondshire	17,630	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ryedale	33,641	166	0·5	−21·3	945	2·8	−6·3	3,073	9·1	159·5
Scarborough	45,211	1,002	2·2	−12·6	1,787	4·0	−4·3	6,530	14·4	13·1
Selby	30,639	233	0·8	−1·3	1,470	4·8	−3·9	1,870	6·1	−7·7
York	41,273	1,184	2·9	252·4	488	1·2	−51·3	4,411	10·7	71·9

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: East Midlands

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Derbyshire										
Amber Valley	44,177	152	0·3	−6·7	1,115	2·5	−19·7	2,500	5·7	−16·7
Bolsover	28,101	1,994	7·1	−14·3	258	0·9	−20·4	3,452	12·3	228·8
Chesterfield	39,270	1,291	3·3	5·0	1,372	3·5	−12·6	6,677	17·0	3·4
Derby	85,959	2,855	3·3	−14·7	4,386	5·1	14·8	15,464	18·0	−11·7
Erewash	41,003	2,017	4·9	23·2	1,387	3·4	−9·7	7,171	17·5	0·7
High Peak	31,470	612	1·9	0·8	1,561	5·0	−15·9	1,397	4·4	−3·8
North East Derbyshire	36,729	155	0·4	4·0	424	1·2	−10·2	6,776	18·4	0·5
South Derbyshire	26,050	908	3·5	31·4	1,234	4·7	−11·5	5,566	21·4	68·7
West Derbyshire	26,800	112	0·4	0·0	809	3·0	−14·0	871	3·3	9·1
Leicestershire										
Blaby	29,360	330	1·1	−2·9	270	0·9	35·0	450	1·5	7·1
Charnwood	53,916	128	0·2	7·6	1,867	3·5	−5·6	1,286	2·4	52·9
Harborough	23,580	641	2·7	−7·6	677	2·9	7·3	1,303	5·5	−16·2
Hinckley and Bosworth	34,886	976	2·8	−2·8	973	2·8	−16·0	N/A	N/A	N/A
Leicester	108,700	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Melton	16,896	261	1·5	−17·4	154	0·9	−19·8	1,007	6·0	5·7
North West Leicestershire	30,527	259	0·8	−20·1	1,534	5·0	−2·3	4,103	13·4	−5·1
Oadby and Wigston	19,410	103	0·5	−5·5	62	0·3	−52·3	176	0·9	−15·8
Rutland	11,704	66	0·6	−2·9	205	1·8	−11·6	972	8·3	−7·9
Lincolnshire										
Boston	21,467	542	2·5	−23·7	179	0·8	−23·8	1,005	4·7	−25·8
East Lindsey	46,342	640	1·4	−3·8	1,368	3·0	−4·1	13,097	28·3	−5·7
Lincoln	31,825	810	2·5	−5·8	1,430	4·5	−6·5	2,533	8·0	−4·4
North Kesteven	31,057	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Holland	25,500	420	1·6	−8·7	2,652	10·4	−3·1	2,552	10·0	44·8
South Kesteven	40,158	489	1·2	−9·1	1,093	2·7	−24·1	4,179	10·4	−10·0
West Lindsey	31,446	1,043	3·3	5·5	844	2·7	−5·8	8,260	26·3	484·6
Northamptonshire										
Corby	19,581	18	0·1	0·0	61	0·3	−41·9	86	0·4	−52·2

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Daventry	23,118	556	2·4	−4·3	560	2·4	−8·6	2,745	11·9	−6·8
East Northamptonshire	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kettering	28,789	0	0·0	N/A	4,007	13·9	−10·5	1,336	4·6	19·1
Northampton	64,623	1,318	2·0	−6·8	2,271	3·5	−4·7	4,646	7·2	43·5
South Northamptonshire	25,555	53	0·2	0·0	230	0·9	125·5	4,188	16·4	478·5
Wellingborough	25,490	352	1·4	47·9	777	3·0	−13·6	1,249	4·9	73·2

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: Nottinghamshire

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Ashfield	41,417	23	0·1	−14·8	2,218	5·4	−3·3	6,292	15·2	13·7
Bassetlaw	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Broxtowe	40,806	180	0·4	2·9	463	1·1	−20·9	2,854	7·0	−19·9
Gedling	42,011	1,721	4·1	5·6	624	1·5	2·8	5,631	13·4	14·1
Mansfield	39,242	312	0·8	41·2	80	0·2	−27·3	2,221	5·7	−2·9
Newark and Sherwood	40,828	278	0·7	−14·2	1,681	4·1	−4·9	1,283	3·1	7·7
Nottingham	110,612	559	0·5	−1·1	2,145	1·9	−9·1	22,924	20·7	−7·2
Rushcliffe	38,285	75	0·2	−5·1	1,540	4·0	−0·6	3,263	8·5	−3·8

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: Eastern

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Bedfordshire										
Luton	61,653	80	0·1	−29·2	2,903	4·7	−8·1	1,650	2·7	0·0
Mid-Bedfordshire	39,800	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Bedfordshire	49,780	280	0·6	−0·4	820	1·6	−4·7	5,000	10·0	0·0
South Bedfordshire	39,348	35	0·1	0·0	521	1·3	−0·8	2,408	6·1	245·0
Buckinghamshire										
Aylesbury Vale	49,973	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chiltern	33,911	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Milton Keynes	58,915	65	0·1	−7·1	1,400	2·4	−9·7	1,200	2·0	−4·0
South Bucks	23,910	67	0·3	−10·7	174	0·7	−9·4	624	2·6	−11·9
Wycombe	57,570	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cambridgeshire										
Cambridge	40,178	336	0·8	N/A	408	1·0	N/A	3,069	7·6	35·8
East Cambridgeshire	22,035	261	1·2	−29·3	423	1·9	−23·5	4,960	22·5	179·1
Fenland	27,404	N/A	N/A	N/A	400	1·5	−17·4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Huntingdonshire	48,848	584	1·2	−2·7	673	1·4	−10·3	3,396	7·0	−10·8
Peterborough	55,248	1,808	3·3	−2·8	358	0·6	−17·7	3,354	6·1	81·2
South Cambridgeshire	43,475	465	1·1	−1·7	1,728	4·0	−3·8	3,197	7·4	4·6
Essex										
Basildon	58,420	240	0·4	0·0	110	0·2	−15·4	721	1·2	1·3
Braintree	43,459	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Brentwood	27,606	77	0·3	5·5	324	1·2	−15·6	192	0·7	61·3
Castle Point	32,532	4	0·0	−73·3	190	0·6	0·0	2	0·0	−95·3
Chelmsford	53,983	1,414	2·6	1·1	2,089	3·8	−11·2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colchester	53,320	1,671	3·1	−6·4	619	1·2	−24·3	3,935	7·4	3·3
Epping Forest	45,970	1,969	4·3	0·2	1,633	3·6	0·0	3,629	7·9	−0·4
Harlow	28,838	2	0·0	0·0	11	0·0	−21·4	810	2·8	−0·4
Maldon	19,521	24	0·1	−46·7	1,142	5·9	−8·3	861	4·4	11·7
Rochford	27,880	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Southend-on-Sea	66,861	17	0·0	21·4	981	1·5	−21·9	331	0·5	−81·3
Tendring	56,090	401	0·7	0·3	1,330	2·4	−6·5	3,539	6·3	−23·0
Thurrock	46,755	2,471	5·3	710·2	2,546	5·4	−3·1	6,222	13·3	−1·6
Uttlesford	23,724	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Hertfordshire										
Broxbourne	29,956	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dacorum	50,476	885	1·8	−5·2	91	0·2	−9·9	1,209	2·4	−9·8
East Hertfordshire	42,381	1,612	3·8	−11·0	340	0·8	−21·8	3,941	9·3	−5·4
Hertsmere	33,473	N/A	N/A	N/A	513	1·5	−38·0	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Hertfordshire	42,234	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
St. Albans	46,310	12	0·0	−42·9	725	1·6	−7·5	1,400	3·0	−14·5

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Stevenage	27,710	5	0·0	0·0	303	1·1	−1·0	977	3·5	−19·9
Three Rivers	28,797	80	0·3	0·0	143	0·5	−16·4	1,588	5·5	−22·8
Watford	28,689	6	0·0	100·0	578	2·0	−10·9	3758	13·1	0·8
Welwyn Hatfield	35,990	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Norfolk										
Breckland	40,248	701	1·7	−23·5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Broadland	39,460	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Great Yarmouth	35,060	451	1·3	68·3	2,310	6·6	−7·4	9,130	26·0	4·3
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	52,043	962	1·8	−9·2	2,972	5·7	−8·6	3,567	6·9	−9·4
North Norfolk	40,000	1,287	3·2	−16·3	1,442	3·6	−8·7	2,860	7·1	1687·5
Norwich	52,412	220	0·4	0·0	5,013	9·6	−4·8	8,227	15·7	−8·9
South Norfolk	39,400	315	0·8	4·0	1,398	3·5	−4·6	7,479	19·0	6·3
Suffolk										
Babergh	29,992	675	2·3	8·9	711	2·4	−16·5	2,045	6·8	5·9
Forest Heath	20,566	246	1·2	1·7	826	4·0	−1·2	788	3·8	−16·2
Ipswich	48,456	230	0·5	−3·0	4,150	8·6	−11·2	14,873	30·7	42·0
Mid Suffolk	28,477	1,522	5·3	0·4	849	3·0	−9·1	8,696	30·5	−0·7
St. Edmundsbury	34,057	423	1·2	−5·8	1,421	4·2	−4·1	4,136	12·1	−5·6
Suffolk Coastal	42,231	360	0·9	−7·0	848	2·0	−23·6	N/A	N/A	N/A
Waveney	43,331	416	1·0	−10·7	1,808	4·2	−7·9	N/A	N/A	N/A

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: London

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Greater London										
Greater London Council	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
City of London	3,268	0	0·0	N/A	0	0·0	N/A	0	0·0	N/A
Barking and Dagenham	58,623	1,335	2·3	−0·4	9,908	16·9	−4·2	9,462	16·1	193·6
Barnet	116,945	10,200	8·7	N/A	2,631	2·2	N/A	25,884	22·1	N/A
Bexley	82,141	1,785	2·2	-1·0	N/A	N/A	N/A	9,514	11·6	92·7
Brent	93,250	7,364	7·9	−1·8	1,288	1·4	−4·2	22,725	24·4	27·2
Bromley	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Camden	82,983	10,991	13·2	10·5	2,112	2·5	−6·1	15,809	18·8	47·8
Croydon	123,350	808	0·7	−1·1	4,989	4·0	−3·3	7,439	6·0	−6·7
Ealing	105,145	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Enfield	100,822	3,903	3·9	−12·7	N/A	N/A	N/A	9,021	8·9	N/A
Greenwich	86,646	4,532	5·2	0·6	3,896	4·5	0·6	15,180	17·5	0·5
Hackney	76,500	15,740	20·6	16·2	2,340	3·1	−44·2	24,540	32·1	99·7
Hammersmith and Fulham	61,333	10,038	16·4	0·6	4,757	7·8	−3·3	9,441	15·4	3·4
Haringey	81,953	11,323	13·8	0·5	3,404	4·2	−17·5	19,105	23·3	53·0
Harrow	76,080	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Havering	89,727	1,988	2·2	1·0	1,122	1·3	−1·8	16,080	17·9	−2·3
Hillingdon	92,654	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hounslow	79,820	3,856	4·8	−4·7	5,096	6·4	−3·8	20,608	25·8	0·3
Islington	74,689	10,805	14·5	0·0	2,409	3·2	0·0	12,430	16·6	19·2
Kensington and Chelsea	73,800	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kingston upon Thames	55,166	271	0·5	0·4	773	1·4	−8·6	3,779	6·9	−14·0
Lambeth	108,580	16,695	15·4	8·8	3,735	3·4	−17·9	15,510	14·3	−0·5
Lewisham	96,391	14,213	14·7	108·7	N/A	N/A	N/A	14,244	14·8	20·0
Merton	67,821	2,560	3·8	−7·1	3,551	3·8	60·8	8,332	12·3	14·8
Newham	82,896	14,289	17·2	6·7	7,906	9·5	−9·8	24,728	29·8	169·0
Redbridge	87,870	2,033	2·3	−18·0	2,241	2·6	−10·3	6,868	7·8	−13·0
Richmond upon Thames	71,248	5,555	7·8	N/A	1,424	2·0	N/A	8,120	11·4	N/A
Southwark	93,776	14,368	15·3	30·6	4,630	4·9	−6·7	12,980	13·8	−11·3
Sutton	66,665	2,846	4·3	8·5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tower Hamlets	62,349	6,777	10·9	−8·0	3,672	5·9	−9·1	20,483	32·9	663·7
Waltham Forest	86,500	9,300	10·8	−0·5	3,280	3·8	−20·1	14,500	16·8	35·9
Wandsworth	108,986	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Westminster, City of	101,716	2,291	2·3	−19·2	8,209	8·1	−7·4	14,624	14·4	31·1

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: South Eastern

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Berkshire										
Bracknell	32,860	71	0·2	−1·4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Newbury	46,939	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reading	49,900	1,870	3·7	−1·1	1,070	2·1	−6·0	8,370	16·8	55·3
Slough	35,821	26	0·1	−10·3	396	1·1	−13·5	N/A	N/A	N/A
Windsor and Maidenhead	52,142	125	0·2	−12·0	1,250	2·4	−10·2	988	1·9	16·7
Wokingham	44,770	213	0·5	1·4	494	1·1	−8·5	2,125	4·7	−0·2
East Sussex										
Brighton	63,532	4,515	7·1	−9·3	2,321	3·7	−5·9	12,672	19·9	52·3
Eastbourne	34,190	51	0·1	0·0	2,302	6·7	−2·2	5,772	16·9	4·1

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Hastings	33,353	2,290	6·9	76·2	950	2·8	−5·0	2,541	7·6	1·6
Hove	40,245	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lewes	34,166	32	0·1	−28·9	182	0·5	−14·2	2,510	7·3	−6·2
Rother	35,501	362	1·0	−9·5	681	1·9	−5·3	503	1·4	−16·2
Wealden	49,529	626	1·3	0·0	1,028	2·1	−7·7	4,608	9·3	0·4
Hampshire										
Basingstoke and Deane	50,284	352	0·7	12·8	317	0·6	−14·8	5,621	11·2	−0·0
East Hampshire	36,506	613	1·7	−1·1	992	2·7	−5·3	4,232	11·6	41·0
Eastleigh	37,301	19	0·1	18·8	2,173	5·8	−0·6	3,500	9·4	−18·9
Fareham	34,750	53	0·2	−3·6	235	0·7	−11·3	650	1·9	0·0
Gosport	30,416	210	0·7	−12·5	830	2·7	−10·8	1,679	5·5	2·1
Hart	22,950	65	0·2	−11·0	236	0·8	−10·9	750	2·7	−0·8
Havant	44,874	56	0·1	21·7	175	0·4	−2·8	2,790	6·2	144·7
New Forest	63,313	845	1·3	3·6	526	0·8	−13·6	5,367	8·5	−4·1
Portsmouth	72,613	2,200	3·0	−0·9	4,521	6·2	−5·2	N/A	N/A	N/A
Rushmoor	28,025	125	0·4	13·6	350	1·2	−4·9	2,868	10·2	20·2
Southampton	79,700	1,400	1·8	0·0	4,500	5·6	0·0	14,300	17·9	2·1
Test Valley	34,668	251	0·7	27·4	192	0·6	−15·8	4,232	12·2	N/A
Winchester	37,256	1,424	3·8	−10·7	574	1·5	−15·5	825	2·2	−27·8
Isle of Wight										
Medina	29,203	127	0·4	1·6	1,318	4·5	−16·2	4,432	15·2	−6·0
South Wight	21,894	52	0·2	0·0	180	0·8	−20·0	3,010	13·7	100·7

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Kent										
Ashford	34,840	570	1·6	−2·1	1,660	4·8	−3·0	2,478	7·1	−5·5
Canterbury	48,740	364	0·7	−3·2	1,446	3·0	−10·7	3,641	7·5	11·0
Dartford	28,848	110	0·4	N/A	957	3·3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dover	40,055	800	2·0	−11·4	923	2·3	−17·9	3,452	8·6	−5·5
Gillingham	35,386	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Gravesham	35,467	186	0·5	−23·5	807	2·3	−18·4	2,144	6·0	−12·9
Maidstone	50,309	2,253	4·5	−10·8	1,443	2·9	−7·1	2,474	4·9	−4·8
Rochester upon Medway	54,988	1,500	2·7	0·0	2,500	4·5	0·0	36	0·1	−98·6
Sevenoaks	41,145	104	0·3	−1·9	1,782	4·3	−4·6	1,796	4·4	−10·1
Shepway	37,682	180	0·5	2·3	1,100	2·9	−8·9	6,662	17·7	−3·9
Swale	44,281	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Thanet	51,932	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tonbridge and Malling	37,109	89	0·2	−8·2	1,723	4·6	−9·4	3,270	8·8	41·8
Tunbridge Wells	38,759	206	0·5	3·0	1,519	3·9	−4·6	1,971	5·1	234·6
Oxfordshire										
Cherwell	41,201	340	0·8	−5·6	700	1·7	−6·7	4,161	10·1	9·1
Oxford	37,483	1,548	4·1	−0·3	739	2·0	−6·2	9,651	25·7	15·3
South Oxfordshire	49,979	1,166	2·3	164·4	1,385	2·8	56·3	2,146	4·3	5·0
Vale of White Horse	38,723	1,012	2·6	−5·1	766	2·0	−6·1	1,289	3·3	−1·9
West Oxfordshire	32,452	630	1·9	−7·8	191	0·6	−20·7	2,326	7·2	−4·3
Surrey										
Elmbridge	46,031	152	0·3	−7·9	394	0·9	−0·5	1,251	2·7	−28·4
Epsom and Ewell	25,650	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Guildford	48,130	513	1·1	32·9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mole Valley	29,942	235	0·8	0·0	250	0·8	0·0	2,209	7·4	N/A
Reigate and Banstead	44,414	237	0·5	−8·5	1,122	2·5	−4·1	1,482	3·3	9·6
Runnymede	28,551	182	0·6	−7·6	1,532	5·4	−5·8	1,390	4·9	1·8
Spelthorne	36,221	N/A	N/A	N/A	220	0·6	−26·7	N/A	N/A	N/A
Surrey Heath	28,050	23	0·1	−8·0	474	1·7	−4·0	352	1·3	−8·6
Tandridge	28,178	104	0·4	−23·5	181	0·6	−10·0	845	3·0	−23·2
Waverley	43,624	40	0·1	−4·8	1,510	3·5	−9·9	1,175	2·7	38·6
Woking	32,943	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
West Sussex										
Adur	24,833	71	0·3	−22·8	171	0·7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Arun	56,315	30	0·1	0·0	550	1·0	−8·3	820	1·5	17·1
Chichester	42,100	71	0·2	−7·8	743	1·8	−10·9	N/A	N/A	N/A
Crawley	31,660	11	0·0	0·0	230	0·7	−5·7	0	0·0	N/A
Horsham	41,367	160	0·4	−4·8	510	1·2	−7·4	1,484	3·6	64·2
Mid Sussex	44,206	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Worthing	41,758	1,542	3·7	−14·4	654	1·6	−12·8	4,366	10·5	−4·8

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: South West

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Avon										
Bath	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Bristol	158,700	10,800	6·8	0·0	3,200	2·0	0·0	27,084	17·1	18·4
Kingswood	33,006	278	0·8	0·7	945	2·9	34·8	1,130	3·4	N/A
Northavon	44,000	334	0·8	−11·4	1,752	4·0	−7·4	3,28	8·2	22·4
Wansdyke	29,127	70	0·2	−6·7	493	1·7	−10·4	3,850	13·2	−7·9
Woodspring	64,703	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cornwall										
Caradon	30,180	2,310	7·7	6·3	2,150	7·1	−5·5	2.055	6·8	−2·0
Carrick	32,406	518	1·6	0·4	2,400	7·4	0·0	2,000	6·2	−1·7
Isles of Scilly	852	0	0·0	N/A	0	0·0	N/A	0	0·0	N/A
Kerrier	33,780	356	1·1	−8·2	2,177	6·4	−12·7	1,625	4·8	5·3
North Cornwall	29,686	477	1·6	−6·8	737	2·5	−9·7	6,392	21·5	−10·6
Penwith	24,952	1,226	4·9	−0·2	1,528	6·1	−11·6	4,255	17·1	49·8
Restormel	33,153	1,302	3·9	130·4	1,500	4·5	56·6	6,000	18·1	149·1
Devon										
East Devon	47,449	1,362	2·9	−2·4	92	0·2	−23·3	4,195	8·8	−1·3
Exeter	37,312	187	0·5	−5·1	1,100	2·9	−3·5	8,772	23·5	293·4
Mid Devon	23,834	417	1·7	−1·0	751	3·2	−13·0	772	3·2	11·7
North Devon	33,419	1,881	5·6	95·9	1,300	3·9	−59·5	6,700	20·0	108·9
Plymouth	92,970	3,120	3·4	−0·2	1,889	2·0	−2·7	20,848	22·4	−1·9
South Hams	31,251	150	0·5	0·0	250	0·8	0·0	2,167	6·9	122·0
Teignbridge	41,393	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Torbay	50,800	573	1·1	−1·5	204	0·4	−10·5	10,103	19·9	1·7
Torridge	20,337	1,056	5·2	187·0	1,496	7·4	21·1	6,509	32·0	225·0
West Devon	17,612	278	1·6	87·8	382	2·2	4·1	1,557	8·8	−2·0
Dorset										
Bournemouth	63,085	50	0·1	11·1	4,404	7·0	−8·3	7,937	12·6	3·1
Christchurch	18,281	2	0·0	−60·0	50	0·3	100·0	1,999	10·9	−3·4
North Dorset	19,663	96	0·5	−5·9	552	2·8	−8·0	453	2·3	−5·6
Poole	52,797	70	0·1	4·5	691	1·3	−4·6	2,459	4·7	1·4
Purbeck	17,513	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
West Dorset	33,722	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Weymouth and Portland	22,688	43	0·2	13·2	765	3·4	−5·2	2,003	8·8	62·4
Wimborne	30,432	360	1·2	−1·9	75	0·2	−16·7	N/A	N/A	N/A

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Gloucestershire										
Cheltenham	35,657	650	1·8	12·1	878	2·5	−12·2	6,666	18·7	71·8
Cotswold	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,050	N/A	4·2
Forest of Dean	28,408	612	2·2	−6·6	3,129	11·0	−6·1	3,345	11·8	12·6
Gloucester	34,265	455	1·3	−8·5	502	1·5	−11·6	5,315	15·5	−4·3
Stroud	41,073	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tewkesbury	32,570	94	0·3	−6·0	539	1·7	8·9	3,297	10·1	−23·3
Somerset										
Mendip	35,024	142	0·4	−7·8	1,104	3·2	−3·2	3,920	11·2	0·3
Sedgemoor	37,002	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Somerset	54,816	164	0·3	−2·4	2,595	4·7	−8·8	545	1·0	−61·9
Taunton Deane	35,894	1,615	4·5	736·8	1,256	3·5	7·4	7,180	20·0	N/A
West Somerset	13,582	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,174	8·6	N/A
Wiltshire										
Kennet	26,076	104	0·4	−1·9	2,114	8·1	−1·9	4,578	17·6	−1·2
North Wiltshire	40,621	1,320	3·2	36·4	520	1·3	73·3	3,683	9·1	56·9
Salisbury	39,951	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Thamesdown	62,854	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
West Wiltshire	38,433	1,879	4·9	241·0	830	2·2	−12·8	4,718	12·3	−21·7

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: West Midlands

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
	Number	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
West Midlands										
Birmingham	388,620	44,300	11·4	−8·8	7,900	2·0	−41·9	101,720	26·2	16·6
Coventry	120,487	939	0·8	2·3	5,409	4·5	−8·0	13,644	11·3	−3·2
Dudley	117,876	5,280	4·5	−0·0	4,456	3·8	−0·4	5,508	4·7	−7·7
Sandwell	119,441	11,700	9·8	3·5	5,280	4·4	−10·6	17,693	14·8	34·3
Solihull	74,955	45	0·1	−10·0	150	0·2	−25·0	1,623	2·2	−4·7
Walsall	97,123	6,605	6·8	−2·7	2,187	2·3	−1·6	12,302	12·7	1·6
Wolverhampton	97,766	8,359	8·6	N/A	4,221	4·3	N/A	7,732	7·9	N/A
Hereford & Worcester										
Bromsgrove	32,069	27	0·1	−20·6	142	0·4	−23·2	2,172	6·8	−8·4
Hereford	19,192	340	1·8	−4·0	304	1·6	1·0	1,422	7·4	−30·2
Leominster	15,204	1,600	10·5	−8·7	300	2·0	−16·7	488	3·2	−3·0

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Malvern Hills	37,140	3,499	9·4	−6·5	841	2·3	−7·7	6,991	18·8	−4·4
Redditch	27,342	158	0·6	29·5	552	2·0	−9·7	1,943	7·1	96·7
South Herefordshire	18,593	870	4·7	−1·5	1,427	7·7	−4·0	1,118	6·0	−7·1
Worcester	29,409	484	1·6	10·3	609	2·1	79·1	6,701	22·8	−1·7
Wychavon	36,898	216	0·6	−4·8	1,937	5·2	−3·0	4,345	11·8	−12·4
Wyre Forest	35,837	471	1·3	−6·4	2,295	6·4	−4·7	5,627	15·7	−20·1
Shropshire										
Bridgnorth	19,038	381	2·0	−5·7	333	1·7	−3·5	1,881	9·9	0·6
North Shropshire	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oswestry	12,526	615	4·9	1·8	560	4·5	−0·2	4,924	39·3	101·0
Shrewsbury and Atcham	35,532	437	1·2	−5·4	396	1·1	−28·8	10,066	28·3	17·7
South Shropshire	15,279	570	3·7	0·4	535	3·5	−3·8	N/A	N/A	N/A
The Wrekin	46,544	965	2·1	−0·2	601	1·3	−4·1	6,193	13·3	144·6
Staffordshire										
Cannock Chase	31,241	70	0·2	−7·9	411	1·3	0·0	1,210	3·9	−16·1
East Staffordshire	37,142	431	1·2	−4·0	3,308	8·9	−2·0	3,555	9·6	16·9
Lichfield	32,795	800	2·4	−5·9	10	0·0	−60·0	2,210	6·7	−4·3
Newcastle-Under-Lyme	47,085	425	0·9	−5·6	1,650	3·5	−8·3	6,000	12·7	−9·5
South Staffordshire	37,743	329	0·9	−31·7	350	0·9	1·2	678	1·8	−7·9
Stafford	44,686	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Staffordshire Moorlands	36,111	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stoke-on-Trent	100,455	5,019	5·0	24·0	10,530	10·5	−6·0	44,000	43·8	4·8
Tamworth	24,466	874	3·6	2,262·2	250	1·0	0·0	3,400	13·9	41·9
Warwickshire										
North Warwickshire	22,304	90	0·4	−18·2	365	1·6	7·7	1,106	5·0	543·0
Nuneaton and Bedworth	42,683	601	1·4	14·0	583	1·4	−4·1	7,796	18·3	−2·9
Rugby	32,846	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Stratford-on-Avon	40,221	728	1·8	−30·1	490	1·2	−44·7	3,306	8·2	58·1
Warwick	45,097	309	0·7	−14·9	201	0·4	−13·0	4,128	9·2	−7·6

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: North West (Inc. Cumbria)

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Greater Manchester										
Bolton	103,289	12,473	12·1	14·6	1,403	1·4	−24·5	30,651	29·7	13·1
Bury	67,988	1,056	1·6	896·2	1,008	1·5	−68·3	9,994	14·7	130·6
Manchester	183,731	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oldham	87,113	4,967	5·7	0·2	3,654	4·2	−9·5	16,828	19·3	−3·5
Rochdale	80,992	5,429	6·7	−1·2	989	1·2	−17·7	14,247	17·6	2·9
Salford	96,465	2,167	2·2	102·9	1,992	2·1	−9·5	9,309	9·7	12·0
Stockport	113,333	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tameside	85,621	5,254	6·1	−8·4	2,077	2·4	−5·4	24,852	29·0	68·1
Trafford	85,600	2,219	2·6	2·6	8 943	10·4	2·0	16,073	18·8	42·5
Wigan	118,253	2,943	2·5	48·4	3,211	2·7	−19·8	20,937	17·7	6·8
Merseyside										
Knowsley	57,846	1,003	1·7	−11·9	580	1·0	332·8	9,267	16·0	51·5
Liverpool	194,717	4,131	2·1	20·7	5,180	2·7	−11·2	36,718	18·9	−6·6
St. Helens	69,941	4,247	6·1	1·0	8,309	11·9	−19·8	22,746	32·5	N/A
Sefton	114,039	2,528	2·2	−5·7	3,532	3·1	−9·4	5,440	4·8	−21·7
Wirral	135,077	4,714	3·5	−15·6	2,660	2·0	−17·9	26,930	19·9	−3·6
Cheshire										
Chester	45,639	1,232	2·7	−9·7	1,191	2·6	−9·2	2,437	5·3	4·8
Congleton	31,570	245	0·8	−25·3	334	1·1	−36·1	437	1·4	−18·3
Crewe and Nantwich	39,510	321	0·8	−9·8	1,379	3·5	−28·3	8,641	21·9	28·0
Ellesmere Port and Neston	30,330	27	0·1	−12·9	498	1·6	−6·6	1,423	4·7	−7·5
Halton	45,110	213	0·5	1,320·0	394	0·9	−41·3	4,154	9·2	−8·9
Macclesfield	58,590	1,003	1·7	0·0	1,871	3·2	−14·1	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vale Royal	43,071	323	0·7	−12·5	1,383	3·2	−7·5	3,940	9·1	−7·5
Warrington	67,849	2,910	4·3	−2·6	1,815	2·7	−24·0	10,644	15·7	24·3
Cumbria										
Allerdale	38,437	3,278	8·5	−5·7	697	1·8	−2·8	10,982	28·6	39·5
Barrow-in-Furness	29,080	147	0·5	54·7	301	1·0	−63·7	6,682	23·0	−3·3
Carlisle	39,087	909	2·3	−12·1	2,351	6·0	−4·8	5,692	14·6	2·8
Copeland	27,632	109	0·4	−20·4	838	3·0	−12·2	4,377	15·8	−6·6
Eden	18,087	308	1·7	−5·5	581	3·2	−7·2	1,747	9·7	−3·3
South Lakeland	40,933	109	0·3	−6·8	811	2·0	3·8	1,501	3·7	1·1

Housing needs appraisal: dwelling stock position at 1 April 1985
Region: North (Exc. Cumbria)

	Stock	Unfit dwellings			Fit but lacking basic amenities			Non-substandard in need of renovation		
		Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number unfit since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number lacking since 1 April 1984	Number	Number as per cent. of stock	Per cent. change in number in need since 1 April 1984
Lancashire										
Blackburn	52,359	5,426	10·4	8·3	3,710	7·1	−2·9	9,304	17·8	9·6
Blackpool	62,219	307	0·5	−4·1	512	0·8	−3·2	2,796	4·5	3·8
Burnley	37,667	1,300	3·5	−4·4	1,500	4·0	36·1	7,141	19·0	−0·6
Chorley	35,233	1,580	4·5	10·8	2,833	8·0	−6·8	4,813	13·7	−4·2
Fylde	29,336	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hyndburn	31,923	2,769	8·7	−6·0	1,347	4·2	−5·5	8,348	26·2	14·8
Lancaster	49,546	400	0·8	−1·7	859	1·7	−11·1	8,874	17·9	−1·6
Pendle	35,271	1,111	3·1	34·0	2,155	6·1	−6·3	9,640	27·3	4·8
Preston	50,900	408	0·8	47·3	2,415	4·7	−11·0	7,710	15·1	3·0
Ribble Valley	19,175	30	0·2	−23·1	792	4·1	−7·3	880	4·6	11·0
Rossendale	26,022	1,640	6·3	−3·2	2,210	8·5	−3·4	5,591	21·5	47·8
South Ribble	37,055	11	0·0	0·0	350	0·9	−18·4	8,139	22·0	−6·2
West Lancashire	39,880	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wyre	39,565	411	1·0	2·5	304	0·8	−24·0	804	2·0	−3·0

Housing (Portsmouth)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the Portsmouth housing investment programme allocation by an amount equal to the cost of refurbishing the Portsdown Park housing estate.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme allocations for individual authorities for 1986-87 have not yet been decided.

Home Insulation Grants

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the amount of money available for home insulation grants.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is currently considering what amount of money will be available for home insulation grants for the next financial year. An announcement will be made shortly.

Landlord and Tenant Act 1954

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the findings of the review of the current working of part II of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend is grateful for the many and varied comments received. Generally they support the view that part II of the Act still works satisfactorily, and that the balance of rights between both parties to business lettings — particularly where small businessmen are involved either as tenants or landlords, is being maintained. We are not convinced that the case for legislative changes to Part II is sufficiently strong to warrant legislation. My Department is advising those consulted accordingly.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will tell local authorities what they can spend on housing and other services for 1986.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I announced in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 12 November at column *113-16* that gross provision for capital expenditure on housing in 1986-87 would be £3,250 million, an increase of £200 million on the provision for 1985-86. I have now decided that of that total, £2,532 million should be for the local authorities, £685 million for the Housing Corporation and £31 million for the new towns. Gross local authority authority provision has been increased from £2,324 million in 1985-86 to £2,532 million for housing and from £621 million to £668 million for the other services block.

I have decided not to change for 1986-87 the prescribed proportion of capital receipts from the sale of assets which local authorities may use for additional capital expenditure. But since receipts continue to grow, authorities in England will have power to spend substantially more on the strength of their new and accomulated receipts in 1986-87 than in 1985-86.

In order to bring expenditure into line with this increased provision account must be taken in setting allocations of the spending power from receipts and of the increasing use local authorities are making of other opportunities for capital expenditure. The totals available for capital expenditure allocations to local authorities on the housing and other services blocks for 1986-87 will therefore be £1,465 million and £294 million respectively.

I am consulting the local authority associations on the distribution of these allocations, and on the need to give greater priority to the renovation of the local authority housing stock.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 November 1985

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General how many jobs have been offered to unemployed citizens in Wolverhampton and the west midlands on the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: 82,432 people have entered the community programme in the midlands region since its start in October 1982; 8,558 of them were in the combined Wolverhampton and Walsall area. A separate breakdown for west midlands and Wolverhampton is not available.

Asbestos

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General under what circumstances the Health and Safety Executive is called in to monitor the excavation of asbestos from outdoor dumps.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Responsibility for ensuring the safe removal of asbestos lies with those undertaking the work. Such work is subject to the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation. The Health and Safety Executive is the enforcing authority at these sites. The frequency of visits to a particular site depends on the degree of hazard. Health and Safety Executive inspectors also have power to investigate complaints.

European Community Regulations

Mr. Marlow asked the Paymaster General if he will institute a process such that, for every measure passed by the European Economic Community, an estimate is given of the effect on manpower requirements in industry.

Mr. Trippier: Departments will be assessing the likely impact on industrial manpower and costs of proposed community initiatives on a similar basis to that of proposals for domestic regulations. The European Commission will be reporting to the Council of Ministers in December on a number of related matters including the scope for action by the Commission.

Bus Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the numbers employed in the bus manufacturing industry in each of the five years prior to phasing out of the new bus grant, and the numbers employed in that industry in each year since that date, providing his Department's estimate of the number of jobs generated by each job in bus manufacture.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Department's employment estimates are analysed according to the 1980 standard industrial classification, which does not separately distinguish the manufacture of buses.

Average Earnings

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what is the figure for the average earnings of full-time *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers in the east midlands compared with the national figure at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest information relates to full-time employees on adult rates working a full week in April 1985. Figures of average gross weekly earnings for employees in the east midlands and in Great Britain are published, for males, in table 12 and, for females, in table 13 of "New Earnings Survey 1985", part A. A copy is in the Library.

Overtime

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what is the average weekly overtime worked by *(a)* males and *(b)* females in the (i) east midlands, (ii) south-east, (iii) west midlands, (iv) north, (v) south-west and (vi) north-west.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest information relates to full-time employees on adult rates working a full week in April 1985. Figures of average weekly overtime hours for employees in each region of Great Britain are published, for males, in table 12 and, for females, in table 13 of "New Earnings Survey 1985", part A. A copy is in the Library.

British Tourist Authority and English Tourist Board

Mr. Hickmet asked the Paymaster General whether he intends to proceed with a merger of the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board.

Mr. Trippier: Following consultation with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and with Mr. Duncan Bluck, the chairman of both the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board, we have concluded that there should be no further steps towards a merger of the two bodies. The present arrangements whereby the boards share common premises and have certain common services departments are working well. A merger, which would require amendment to the Development of Tourism Act 1969 would probably yield little further gains in efficiency and could lead to difficulties in the promotional activities of the BTA in relation to Scotland and Wales.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Community (Own Resources)

Mrs. Currie asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the payment in November of December non-value added tax own resources to the European Communities.

Mr. Brooke: In accordance with article 10(2) of Council Regulation 2891/77, the Commission invited member states to pay on 20 November instead of 20 December non-VAT own resources collected in October. These own resources consist of agricultural, sugar and isoglucose levies and customs duties. Following scrutiny of the need for the early payment, the Government have paid an amount of £134 million to the Commission. The payment of levies and duties on 20 December 1985 made

under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972 will be reduced by a corresponding amount. There will therefore be no net addition to public expenditure.

Council of Finance Ministers (Meeting)

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Council of Finance Ministers.

Mr. Lawson: The ECOFIN Council met in Brussels on 18 November. I represented the United Kingdom.

In the light of the conclusions of the Milan European Council, consideration was given to the question of amendment of the provisions of the Treaty of Rome concerned with monetary co-operation. No agreement was reached. This matter will receive further technical examination in the Monetary Committee.

The Council approved the grant under the Community loan mechanism of a loan of 1.75 Becu to Greece. The loan, which is subject to a number of detailed conditions, will be made available in two equal instalments. The second instalment, which will not be payable before 1 January 1987, would be made in the light of examination of the performance of the Greek economy.

There was a further discussion of the Commission's annual economic report and also of the Commission's views on indirect tax harmonisation.

The Council agreed in principle to raise the ceiling on the issue of Euratom loans to 3 Becu.

Following the lifting of a Danish reserve, the Council adopted the Directives establishing common rules for unit trusts and other undertakings for collective investment in financial securities (UCITS).

Manufactured Goods

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the balance of trade in manufactured goods for 1979 and 1984.

Mr. MacGregor: The balance of trade in manufactured goods was in surplus by £2,698 million in 1979 and in deficit by £3,786 million in 1984. In contrast, the current account as a whole was in deficit by £736 million in 1979 and in surplus by £935 million in 1984.

European Community

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of net contributions to the European Economic Community in each of the coming three years.

Mr. Brooke: The latest estimate of the United Kingdom's net payments to European Community institutions for the coming three financial years was published in the Autumn Statement and laid before the House on 12 November.

Taxation

Mr. Best asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce legislation to provide for a system of self-assessment for personal taxation.

Mr. Moore: Self-assessment will be among the matters to be discussed in the Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation, along with other possible longer-term developments.

Glass and Glazing Industry (VAT)

Mr. Holt asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many representations he has received from the glass and glazing industry over the imposition of value added tax.

Mr. Brooke: Very few since my hon. Friend's previous question on 27 June.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Technology Transfer

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he proposes to continue to impose on United Kingdom companies the terms of the 1962 NATO agreements on technology transfer; and if he will give an estimate of the effect of this agreement on United Kingdom high technology exports in 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Channon: I am not aware of any such agreement.

Post Office (Bradford)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, he will raise with him the exclusion of Bradford from the dedicated inter-city service operated by the Post Office and the implications of the withdrawal of Bradford/Kings Cross train services for evening post collection times in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: No, this is a matter for the Post Office Board.

Bankers' Guarantee Scheme

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown for each of the last three financial years of the percentages of comprehensive bankers' guarantee scheme policy-holders with facility values of *(a)* up to £0·5 million, *(b)* £0·5 to £1 million and *(c)* over £1 million and the percentages of total claims paid under the scheme for each of these categories.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Empty Houses

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of empty houses in his Department's ownership; and if he will list them by local authority.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The numbers of vacant service and civilian houses at the end of July 1985 were:

	Number
Service	14,235
Civilian	397

These figures cannot be broken down by local authority without disproportionate effort. However, details are available of service vacancies by standard economic region:

	Number
Northern	− 132
Yorkshire	−1,413
East Midlands	−1,479
East Anglia	− 643
South East	−5,563
South West	−2,485
West Midlands	− 562
North West	− 143
Wales	− 321
Scotland	−1,205
Northern Ireland	− 289

Service Personnel (Postings)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current posting of SAC Geoffrey Jones;

(2) what is the current posting of SAC Christopher Payne;

(3) what is the current posting of SAC Alan Lightowler;

(4) what is the current posting of SAC Wayne Kriehn;

(5) what is the current posting of SAC Gwynfor Owen.

Mr. Stanley: It is not the usual practice to publish details of the movements of individual service men in the course of their duties; however, in this instance, I can say that the current posting of these service men is RAF, West Drayton.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current posting of Signalman David Hardman.

Mr. Stanley: Former Signalman David Hardman gave notice in October 1983 that he wished to leave the Army on completion of nine years service, and was acccordingly discharged in October 1984.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current posting of Lance-corporal Anthony Glass;

(2) what is the current posting of Signalman Martin Tuffy.

Mr. Stanley: It is not the usual practice to publish details of the movements of individual service men in the course of their duties; however, in this instance, I can say that the current posting of these service men is a signal regiment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current posting of SAC Paul Davies.

Mr. Stanley: Former SAC Paul Davies was discharged from the RAF in October 1984.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any of the eight members of 9 Signals Regiment, recently acquitted on spying charges, have expressed a desire to leave the service.

Mr. Stanley: Notices requesting discharge were received from former Signalman David Hardman in October 1983 and Signalman Martin Tuffy in February 1985.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the eight members of 9 Signals Regiment, recently acquitted on spying charges, will be permitted to remain in 9 Signals Regiment;

(2) if the members of 9 Signals Regiment recently acquitted on spying charges have been allocated comparable tasks to those they undertook before their arrest.

Mr. Stanley: Former Signalman David Hardman, Signalman Martin Tuffy, Lance Corporal Anthony Glass and SAC Christopher Payne have either left the armed forces already or will do so shortly on completion of their engagements.

The next steps for SAC Alan Lightowler, SAC Wayne Kriehn, SAC Gwynfor Owen and SAC Geoffrey Jones are under consideration.

Brigade of Gurkhas

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Nepalese Government concerning the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Mr. Stanley: Her Majesty's Government maintain close and regular contact with the Government of Nepal on matters concerning the Brigade of Gurkhas. My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence visited Nepal between 25 and 31 October.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many battalions of the Gurkhas he plans to disband;

(2) if he plans to make a statement concerning the planned strength of the Gurkhas when Hong Kong is returned to the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot add to the Ministry of Defence news release of 27 September headed "Hong Kong Stability Permits Force Reductions", a copy of which is in the Library.

Tornado Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost of a Tornado ADV Mk 2.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimated cost for the Tornado Mk 2 air defence variant is £17 million at 1984-85 average outturn prices.

Lieutenant-Colonel Boyle

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current posting of Lt.-Col. Boyle, Royal Signals.

Mr. Stanley: The Ministry of Defence.

Royal Air Force (Training)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current cost of training a fast jet pilot for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The average cost to the Ministry of Defence of training a student pilot to the point when he joins an operational fast jet squadron is approximately £2·87 million (at 1984-85 prices).

St. Helena

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department is involved in any discussion about the construction of an airfield on St. Helena.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 11 November, at column *39*. The proposal to construct an airfield on St. Helena has been discussed with my Department, which has confirmed that there is no military requirement for one.

Dockyards

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the number of people employed at Devonport dockyard from 1970 to 1985 as *(a)* Royal Naval personnel and *(b)* industrial civil servants;

(2) if he will list the number of people employed at Portsmouth dockyard since 1970 as *(a)* Royal Naval personnel and *(b)* industrial civil servants;

(3) if he will list the number of people employed at Rosyth dockyard for each year from 1970 to 1985; *(a)* Royal Naval personnel and *(b)* industrial civil servants.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The number of *(a)* Royal Naval personnel and *(b)* industrial civil servants employed at Rosyth, Devonport and Portsmouth dockyards as at 1 April in each of the years in question was:

Year	*Portsmouth*		*Devonport*		*Rosyth*	
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
1970	23	7,837	23	10,319	24	4,284
1971	21	7,533	24	10,166	19	4,465
1972	18	7,398	21	9,946	18	4,481
1973	18	7,252	21	9,778	15	4,502
1974	16	7,107	21	9,792	13	4,531
1975	16	6,638	21	9,617	14	4,344
1976	14	6,383	18	9,620	14	4,368
1977	13	6,312	18	9,583	10	4,480
1978	14	6,215	17	9,529	11	4,369
1979	13	5,806	18	9,721	9	4,410
1980	12	5,409	18	9,419	10	4,293
1981	9	5,289	21	9,204	7	4,206
1982	10	4,578	18	9,205	8	4,157
1983	8	3,611	12	9,573	8	4,505
1984	7	2,515	15	9,936	10	4,697
1985	*	*	15	9,764	8	4,675

* Portsmouth ceased to be a royal dockyard from 1 October 1984.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of Royal Naval ships that have had major refits in Rosyth, Devonport and Portsmouth since 1975.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Major refits completed at the three dockyards simce 1975 are as follows:

Portsmouth HM Ships (a)	*Devonport HM Ships (b)*	*Rosyth HM Ships (c)*
Sealion	Phoebe	Resolution
Endurance	Hecla	londonderry
Bulldog	Sirius	Repulse
Beagle	Dido	Renown
Glamorgan	Hecate	Yarmouth
	Argonaut	Walkerton
	Crichton	Revenge
	Danae	Kellington
	Fox	Iveston
	Fawn	Hubberston
	Andromeda	
	Penelope	
	Charybdis	
	Jupiter	
	Swiftsure	
	Scylla	
	Sovereign	
	Superb	

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Governing Bodies

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will issue guidelines to local education authorities regarding the role of head teachers in the election of teaching and non-teaching staff representatives on school governing bodies; what representations he has received on this subject; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to issue guidance to local education authorities concerning the procedures for the election and appointment of governors and representatives to school governing bodies.

Mr. Dunn: A few representations have been received requesting the issue of general guidance on the procedures for elections of parent and teacher governors, but none specifically on the role of the headteacher in such matters. Under section 2(9) of the Education Act 1980, the necesary arrangements for the election of governors are left for local decision by the local education authority or, in the case of an aided or special agreement school, the governing body, always provided that any contested election is by secret ballot. In view of the wide variety of local circumstances, the Government continue to believe that these matters are best determined locally and has no plans to issue guidance on procedures.

Lindop Inquiry

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Lindop inquiry had available to it copies of both Price Waterhouse reports on the Council for National Academic Awards before reaching its conclusions.

Mr. Walden: The Price Waterhouse reports were commissioned by the Council for National Academic Awards for its own internal management purposes and I understand that the Lindop committee therefore did not ask to see them.

Primary Teachers

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations has he received concerning the criteria for Bachelor of Education courses as set out on circular 3/84 as it applies to the training of primary teachers; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has received two letters on criteria which apply only to the training of primary teachers through undergraduate courses. He has also received letters on criteria which apply equally to other courses of initial teacher training. The criteria set out

in the annex to circular 3/84 are based on the requirements published in the White Paper "Teaching Quality" (Cmnd. 8836) and recommendations made to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales by the Advisory Committee on the Supply and Education of Teachers.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth may receive a reply to his letter dated 26 September relating to appraisal plans and policy on replacement of teachers by advisers.

Mr. Chris Patten: I replied to my hon. Friend on 16 November on behalf of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth may expect a reply to his letter of 17 September about teachers' salaries.

Mr. Chris Patten: I replied to my hon. Friend on 16 November on behalf of my right hon. Friend.

ENVIRONMENT

Waste Disposal

Mr. Sumberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what use he intends to make of his powers under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985 to establish single authorities for waste regulation and disposal where he considers that there would be advantage in joint arrangements between boroughs or districts but no satisfactory arrangements were made before 15 November.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many voluntary groupings of boroughs had been established to deal with operational waste disposal in Greater London by the deadline in the Act of 15 November 1985; how many statutory groupings he will need to establish in Greater London; and when the total post-abolition waste regulation and disposal situation in Greater London will be known.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have carefully considered whether there would be advantage in joint arrangements for the discharge of waste regulation and disposal functions between London borough councils and between district councils in each of the six metropolitan areas. I have concluded that in each area, there would be advantage in certain joint arrangements.

I am glad to report that satisfactory voluntary agreements have been concluded covering all waste disposal functions between district councils in Tyne and Wear, the west midlands, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. I very much welcome the hard work which these authorities have put into reaching agreement on these arrangements by the statutory deadline.

In Merseyside, I am of the view that there is advantage in joint arrangements for all waste disposal functions to cover the five district councils, and I intend to lay an order setting up a single authority for this purpose. Both Sefton and Wirral proposed to discharge these functions independently. However, I am satisfied that the need for adequate control of hazardous waste and the existing links with the rest of the county on operations are such as to rule this out. If the situation were to change, for example by the conclusion of a satisfactory agreement with a neighbouring county council, I should be prepared to consider an amending order to exclude either district from the new authority in due course.

In Greater Manchester, I have concluded that there would be advantage in joint arrangements to cover all ten district councils for regulatory functions. For operational functions, Bolton and Wigan borough councils have both proposed that they should be independent. I have concluded that the present pattern of waste disposal in Greater Manchester is such that there needs to continue to be a single organisation to manage it for all the districts except Bolton and Wigan. I have also concluded that Bolton should form part of this organisation, since the present county council landfill site at Red Moss, Horwich in Bolton, and its proposed extension, play a significant part in the plans of the county council and it would be to the overall advantage of these districts that they should participate in the decision on them. If the decision should subsequently be not to proceed with development of the Red Moss site, I would be prepared to re-consider Bolton's inclusion.

I have also concluded that, because Wigan borough council's operational links with the rest of Greater Manchester are not significant, and because they have the ability to provide sufficient disposal capacity for their own needs within their own area at least into the next decade, there would be no advantage in joint arrangements for this council. I therefore propose to lay an order setting up a single authority for all waste regulation and disposal functions in Greater Manchester, except operational functions in Wigan.

In London, I have concluded that joint arrangements are necessary to deal with the regulation of hazardous waste over the whole of Greater London. No joint arrangements have been made, and I therefore intend to establish a single authority for the whole London area for hazardous waste. As it will not be possible to treat the licensing under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 of hazardous waste disposal sites separately from the licensing of other sites, this authority will be responsible for the licensing of all waste disposal sites in London. The individual London boroughs will, of course, retain their development control planning powers.

I have considered the arguments which have been advanced for and against a single London-wide authority for operational purposes as well, and also those for a single authority for the whole area excluding the boroughs of Bromley, Croydon, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton and Sutton. The Local Government Act 1985 is based on the principle that, so far as possible, services should be devolved to lower-tier authorities. Whilst I recognise the need for joint arrangements between certain authorities in London, I have concluded that, for operational purposes, the balance of advantage does not lie in a single authority or an authority covering all but five boroughs, as compared with the seven groupings of boroughs outlined in my Department's consultation document of 23 July. In consequence, I have to consider whether joint arrangements that have been made on that basis are satisfactory.

I am pleased to say that satisfactory agreements have been concluded for joint arrangements between the London boroughs of Bromley, Croydon, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton and Sutton ('group 1'); and between the

City of London, the city of Westminster and the London borough of Tower Hamlets ('group 6'). The London borough of Tower Hamlets has undertaken in this agreement to redevelop the Northumberland wharf refuse transfer station for the river-borne disposal of waste. I very much welcome this decision, which has the environmental advantage of ensuring that more of London's waste will be carried by river. It must, however, be for Tower Hamlets to decide the exact nature of the redevelopment it wishes to undertake at Northumberland wharf. I have therefore decided that it would be an undue restraint on the discretion of the successor authority if the present proposed scheme were to commence before the London borough of Tower Hamlets has decided what it will in future want. A letter has therefore today been sent to the Greater London council withholding consent to the contract for the proposed scheme under the terms of section 9 of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

A joint agreement has also been made between the London boroughs of Greenwich, Lewisham and Southwark ('group 2'). I take the view that there would be advantage in joint arrangements which included the London borough of Bexley as well as these three boroughs in order to fulfil the terms of the contract which serves Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham and to ensure adequate future waste disposal arrangements. The existing agreement is not, therefore, satisfactory. I intend to establish a single authority for operational functions covering all four boroughs. If, however, agreements were made which effectively dealt with these two questions, I would be prepared to consider an amending order.

Elsewhere in London, no satisfactory voluntary joint arrangements have been made for the discharge of operational functions. In the light of the considerations set out in my Department's consultation document of 23 July and the representations I have subsequently received, I intend to establish four authorities for this purpose, covering: (i) the London boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond-upon-Thames; (ii) the London boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, and Waltham Forest; (iii) the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Newham and Redbridge; and (iv) the London boroughs of Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth and Wandsworth. There will need to be certain transitional arrangements between some of these groups, and the order will provide accordingly. The five statutory authorities for operational purposes in London will be responsible for the disposal of waste from civic amenity sites; the running of the sites themselves will, however, become the responsibility of the borough councils throughout London.

I intend to make all the necessary orders to give effect to these decisions as soon as possible, so that the new authorities can be established on 1 January 1986. In the meantime, I urge all the constituent authorities concerned to make every effort to prepare the ground for the work of the new authorities. My Department will shortly be issuing guidance to assist the constituent authorities in this process.

Inner City Land (Leeds)

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will exercise his powers under section 99 of the Local Government, Land and Planning Act 1980, to direct the Leeds city council to sell the surplus inner city land in their ownership.

Sir George Young: On 19 November 1985, my right hon. Friend directed Leeds city council to take steps to dispose of its interest in 11 sites from the register of unused or underused land compiled by him under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. The directions were made under section 98 of the Act. A list of all the 21 sites where directions were issued on 19 November has been placed in the Library.

Multiple Occupation

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he plans to take to draw the attention of local authorities to the consolidation of their powers in respect of houses in multiple occupation in the Housing Act 1985; and if he plans to give any assistance to authorities to make fuller use of these powers.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend proposes to consult the local authority associations and other interested organisations shortly about a draft circular on houses in multiple occupation. The draft circular will be accompanied by a draft memorandum which will draw attention to local authorities' wide ranging powers for securing improved conditions in this type of accommodation. Subject to these consultations, my right hon. Friend hopes to publish the circular and memorandum shortly after the Housing Act 1985 comes into force on 1 April 1986. The consolidated Act and the new circular will be helpful to local authorities in the use of their powers.

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of his research project on houses in multiple occupation; when he will publish the report of the first stage of the project on the postal survey of local authorities; if he will list the local authorities in which the physical survey of houses in multiple occupation is being conducted; and when he intends to publish the report on the second stage of the project.

Sir George Young: The first part of the research project, a postal survey of all local authorities in England and Wales, has been completed. My Department is studying the contractor's report. My right hon. Friend hopes to announce a summary of the results early in the new year and to publish a detailed account shortly afterwards. The second part of the research, also completed, was a pilot physical and social survey in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the city of Birmingham and the city of Gloucester. This was a feasibility study to consider the scope for a full scale study and the results will not be published. The full physical and social survey of 550 HMOs is being carried out in the following areas:

Bristol city council
Bolton metropolitan borough council
Calderdale metropolitan borough council
Cardiff city council
Colchester borough council
Derby city council
Ealing borough council
Eastbourne borough council
Harrow borough council
Kensington and Chelsea borough council
Kingston upon Hull city council
Leicester city council

Lewisham borough council
Peterborough city council
Plymouth city council
Salisbury district council
Sandwell metropolitan borough council
Wakefield metropolitan borough council
Wirral metropolitan borough council
York city council

This third stage will be completed in the summer of 1986 and the result will be published in the winter of 1986-87.

Local Authority Staff

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what specific statutory rules he proposes to introduce in respect of selection procedures adopted by local councils when making new staff appointments.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer to the reply my right hon. Friend gave on 15 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) at column *31*.

Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many district councils in England and Wales have issued licences under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976; if he will list the names thereof; and what information he has as to the fees charged by each local authority.

Mr. Waldegrave: Local authorities are responsible for granting licences under the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and are required to charge such fees as are necessary to cover their costs. No central record is kept of the number of licences issued and fees charged.

Asbestos (Licensed Tips)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the tips in southern England which are licensed to take asbestos.

Mrs. Rumbold: Details of sites as at March 1984 can be obtained from the Hazardous Waste Inspectorate's register of facilities for the disposal of controlled wastes in England and Wales. A copy is available in the Library.

Wirral Metropolitan Council

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed by the Wirral metropolitan council in 1979 and at the latest available date, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: The total number of staff, full-time plus part-time employed by Wirral metropolitan district council was 15,318 in June 1979 and 14,308 in June 1985.

Special Protection Areas

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received from the Nature Conservancy Council the relevant details required to list a special protection area under directive 79/409, of the Wash (Norfolk-Lincs); and when this site will be listed with the European Commission.

Mrs. Rumbold: Proposals for designation of a number of areas, including the Wash (north Norfolk and Lincolnshire coast), as special protection areas under the EC Directive 79/409 were submitted to this Department by the Nature Conservancy Council in March 1984. The majority of these sites have since been designated following consultation with other Government Departments and interested bodies. Consultations on the Wash are not yet complete.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which sites recognised by the Nature Conservancy Council as being of sufficient importance to merit listing as a special protection area under directive 79/409 are currently threatened by development proposals or approved developments; and if this information has been registered with the European Commission.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Nature Conservancy Council has identified 149 sites in Great Britain which merit designation as special protection areas under EC Directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds. The council is aware of development proposals or approved developments on 8 of these sites:

Caenlochan, Grampian and Tayside
Drumochter Hills, Highland
Firth of Forth, Central Lothian and Fife
Islay, Strathclyde
Loch Kenn and Dee Marshes, Dumfries and Galloway
Teesmouth Flats and Marshes, Durham
Humber Flats and Marshes, Humberside
Stour/Orwell estuary, estuary

The Government are not required to register this information with the EC Commission.

Water Authorities

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* for each water authority in England in cash and real terms since 1979, taking that as the base year (i) the water rate, (ii) the percentage change in water rate, (iii) capital expenditure and (iv) the percentage change in capital expenditure and *(b)* for all local water authorities in England in cash and real terms since 1979, taking that as the base year (1) the average water rate and percentage change and (2) the total capital expenditure and percentage change.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested by the hon. Member is as follows:

Water Services: Average Household Bills (Unmeasured)

Water Authority	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*Percentage change 1979-80 to 1985-86*
	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	
Combined all services								
North West	37·90	46·80	54·69	59·86	63·16	68·25	77·57	104·7
Northumbrian	33·94	41·95	49·19	56·86	64·52	75·22	80·38	136·8

Water Authority	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	Percentage change 1979-80 to 1985-86
	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	£ p	
Severn Trent	40·51	48·99	56·78	62·44	64·63	67·88	76·16	88·0
Yorkshire	39·36	49·04	57·21	65·30	68·78	72·64	82·30	109·1
Anglian	48·83	63·01	75·08	82·66	87·80	93·96	105·98	117·0
Thames	38·62	47·82	54·47	60·77	66·74	73·41	80·75	109·1
Southern	43·80	56·60	67·00	74·40	78·36	82·30	91·72	109·4
Wessex	57·22	65·44	72·87	78·49	81·56	85·59	95·35	66·6
South West	54·57	66·72	75·22	81·24	87·96	93·48	104·59	91·7
English Averages	41·47	51·37	59·47	66·01	70·92	75·73	84·56	103·9
1979-80 Prices*								
Combined all services								
North West	37·90	40·23	42·22	43·09	43·45	44·70	48·16	27·1
Northumbrian	33·94	36·07	37·97	40·93	44·39	49·27	49·90	47·0
Severn Trent	40·51	42·12	43·83	44·94	44·46	44·46	47·28	16·7
Yorkshire	39·36	42·16	44·16	47·00	47·32	47·58	51·10	29·8
Anglian	48·83	54·17	57·95	59·50	60·40	61·54	65·80	34·7
Thames	38·62	41·11	42·05	43·74	45·92	48·08	50·13	29·8
Southern	43·80	48·66	51·72	53·55	53·91	53·90	56·94	30·0
Wessex	57·22	56·26	56·25	56·50	56·11	56·06	59·20	3·5
South West	54·57	57·36	58·06	58·48	60·51	61·23	64·93	19·0
English Averages	41·47	44·16	45·90	47·51	48·79	49·60	52·50	26·6

* Deflated by RPI.

Water authorities capital investment (excluding land drainage) £million cash

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86†	Per cent. change 1979-80—1985-86
North-west	84·2	92·5	88·5	108·3	132·1	146·7	160·0	90·0
Northumbrian	61·0	59·1	37·7	37·7	32·0	26·9	32·5	−46·7
Severn-Trent	75·8	98·7	97·0	139·6	114·8	106·7	117·0	54·4
Yorkshire	56·4	76·4	73·8	71·3	77·4	93·2	99·5	76·4
Anglian	61·8	80·2	93·7	90·4	113·2	93·0	103·3	67·2
Thames	70·6	78·7	79·9	94·7	112·4	104·3	109·0	54·4
Southern	46·0	47·2	50·1	50·1	58·3	56·8	61·4	33·5
Wessex	24·7	24·8	29·6	31·8	40·0	36·7	48·2	95·1
South-west	18·5	21·1	21·2	25·4	29·6	39·2	37·0	100·0
England	499·0	578·7	571·5	649·3	709·8	703·5	767·9	53·9

*Water authorities' capital investment (excluding land drainage) £million 1979-80 prices**

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86†	Per cent. change 1979-80—1985-86
North-west	84·2	74·4	70·6	87·8	107·5	116·4	120·9	43·6
Northumbrian	61·0	47·5	30·1	30·6	26·0	21·3	24·6	−59·8
Severn-Trent	75·8	79·4	77·3	113·1	93·4	84·7	88·4	16·6
Yorkshire	56·4	61·4	58·8	57·8	63·0	74·0	75·2	33·3
Anglian	61·8	64·5	74·7	73·3	92·1	73·8	78·0	26·3
Thames	70·6	63·3	63·7	76·8	91·5	82·8	82·3	16·6
Southern	46·0	38·0	39·9	40·6	47·4	45·1	46·4	·8
Wessex	24·7	19·9	23·6	25·8	32·5	29·1	36·4	47·4
South-west	18·5	17·0	16·9	20·6	24·1	31·1	28·0	51·1
England	499·0	465·4	455·7	526·3	577·5	558·2	580·1	16·3

* Deflated by Public Works Non-Road (PWNR) output price index
† Figures for 1985-86 from authorities' latest monitoring returns

Prefabricated Concrete Houses

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to when the repair systems for prefabricated concrete houses will be approved and licensed by PRC Homes Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I am pleased to report that PRC Homes Ltd. has now approved and licensed the first two repair systems for prefabricated reinforced concrete houses. Both systems are for the Cornish Unit type and were submitted by W. G. Curtin and Partners and John Laing Construction Ltd. respectively. I understand from

PRC Homes Ltd. that 11 further systems (for Airey, Cornish Unit, Unity, Reema and Woolaway houses) are currently being appraised; that a further five (for Airey, Reema, Unity and Woolaway) have been received by PRC Homes Ltd. for assessment and that a further 33 systems are currently being prepared by builders and designers, for submission to PRC Homes Ltd. These are expected to cover Airey, Boot, Cornish Unit, Orlit. Parkinson, Stent, Tarran, Unity, Wates and Woolaway house types.

This represents considerable progress: we can therefore anticipate several more approvals emerging in the near future. It is, of course, good news for PRC home owners who are looking forward to having their homes repaired, with grant assistance from their local authorities, under the provisions of the Housing Defects Act 1984.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to when the London Docklands Development Corporation will have concluded the master building agreement with Credit Suisse First Boston concerning the scheme for Canary wharf.

Sir George Young: Negotiations are continuing between LDDC and the American consortium, and I understand that they aim to conclude the master building agreement in early 1986.

River Quality Surveys

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he is making for river quality surveys.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am pleased to announce that, with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, I am arranging for information on the qualities of rivers, canals and estuaries in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in 1985 to be assembled and published in 1986. These surveys will, in conjunction with earlier ones, allow an assessment of the progress being made by our authorities in the protection and improvement of the water environment.

World Heritage List

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what nominations he has in mind to put forward for the world heritage list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My noble Friend the Minister of State made an announcement today in another place on this subject.

The World Heritage convention, to which the United Kingdom ratified last year, provides for the protection of cultural and natural properties of outstanding universal value, in part by the drawing up of a world heritage list. The Government are anxious that the United Kingdom and the Dependent Territories should be fully and properly represented in the list. To secure an entry sites should first be included in the so-called "tentative list" which gives advance warning of nominations likely to come forward in the next few years. The second stage is the submission of fully-documented nominations to the world heritage committee. If the nominations are approved, the sites are then entered on the world heritage list.

The tentative list of sites that the United Kingdom is putting forward is as follows:

I. CULTURAL PROPERTIES

A. *Monuments*

i. Dark Age and Medieval

1. St. Patrick's isle (Isle of Man)
2. Canterbury cathedral
3. Tower of London
4. Durham cathedral and castle
5. Fountains Abbey and St. Mary's, Studley Royal
6. St. David's Close and Bishop's palace
7. Historic Cambridge colleges

ii. Post-medieval

8. Chatsworth
9. Blenheim Palace
10. Stourhead
11. Menai and Conwy suspension bridges
12. The Palace of Westminster
13. SS Great Britain and Western Docks, Bristol

B. *Groups of Buildings*

14. Ecclesiastical sites of Lough Erne
15. The castles and town walls of King Edward I in Gwynedd
16. Lacock
17. Bath
18. Edinburgh Old and New towns
19. New Lanark
20. Cregneash (Isle of Man)
21. Ironbridge gorge
22. Gibraltar defences

C. *Sites*

23. Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites
24. Mainland Orkney
25. Navan fort
26. Caerleon Legionary fortress
27. Hadrian's Wall military zone

II. NATURAL PROPERTIES

28. St. Kilda
29. Giant's Causeway and Causeway coast
30. Lake District national park
31. The Wash and North Norfolk coast
32. The British Virgin Islands: Anegada
33. The British Virgin Islands: The Baths area of Virgin Gorda
34. St. Helena: Diana's Peak and High Peak
35. Henderson Island, Pitcairn Group
36. Gough Island, Tristan da Cunha

The United Kingdom proposes to put forward the following substantive nominations this year:

Durham Cathedral and Castle
Fountains Abbey and St. Mary's Studley Royal
The castles and town walls of King Edward I in Gwynedd
Ironbridge Gorge
Stonehenge, Avebury and associated sites
St. Kilda
Giant's Causeway and Causeway coast

NORTHERN IRELAND

Short Brothers plc

Mr. Moynihan asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about funding to Short Brothers plc for the year ending 31 March 1986.

Mr. Tom King: Following consideration of Shorts' 1984 corporate plan update, the Government have authorised an external funding limit of £16 million covering the period 1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986. As their contribution to this funding the Government have

agreed to provide up to £6·44 million largely by means of payment under a repayable launch-aid contract and normal grants in respect of product development undertaken by the company. The balance of the £16 million will be raised by the company through commercial borrowings. The agreed funding level will enable Shorts to continue development of the three parts of its business—aircraft, aerostructures and guided missiles.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many miles of motorway in Northern Ireland are currently lit; if he will break them down by motorway; how many miles of motorway are planned to be lit; of those miles lit, in the case of how many the lights were installed during construction of the motorway itself; and in how many cases the lighting was installed separately after construction of the motorway itself; and what mileage was involved.

Mr. Needham: There are 6 miles of motorway in Northern Ireland currently lit: 1 mile on the M1, 3¼ miles on the M2 and 1¾ miles on the M5. It is not planned to light further stretches of motorway. In the case of those miles of motorway lit, 4¾ miles were lit at the time of construction, and in three cases a total of 1¾ miles of motorway were lit after construction.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what will be the respective proportionate contributions towards the costs of operation of the secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference by the two Governments involved;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government expect any financial support from the Government of the United States of America to be available for Northern Ireland in the context of the proposed Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what will be the postal address of the proposed secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference;

(4) where is the location of the proposed secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference;

(5) if the proposed Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will have authority to discuss United Kingdom and Western Alliance defence installations with Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to the right hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Pirate Radio Station Laser 558

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General whether the Director of Public Prosecutions intends to institute proceedings against any person under the Marine &c. Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 for *(a)* supply of food and provisions and *(b)* procuring advertising for the pirate radio station Laser 558; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: Proceedings have already been commenced against one person for supply of food and provisions to Radio Laser. Inquiries are still continuing in respect of persons suspected of procuring advertising for Radio Laser. When the results of those inquiries are known I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Evennett asked the Attorney-General whether the Director of Public Prosecutions intends to institute proceedings under the Marine &c. Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967 against those persons who operated the pirate radio station Laser 558; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: Inquiries are being made in respect of certain persons involved in the operation of Radio Laser, and if sufficient evidence becomes available the Director of Public Prosecutions will institute proceedings. When the results of this inquiry are known I shall write to the hon. Member.

Ms. Adebola Makenjuola

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General when the Director of Public Prosecutions expects to decide whether to prosecute the police officer alleged by Ms. Adebola Makenjuola to have committed a serious sexual assault on her; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has received a police report in this matter, which is presently under consideration.

Deportation Files (Access)

Mr. Cohen asked the Attorney-General what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept on individuals by his Department and the Lord Chancellor's Department; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

The Solicitor-General: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of information in computer systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of the guidelines have been placed in the House Library.

Manual files containing personal information held in the Law Officers' Department or in the Lord Chancellor's Department are available only to members of the respective Department's staff who need to see them. The precise arrangements vary according to the type and location of the file. In the Law Officers' Department the identity of the members of the staff to whom the file has been passed is ascertainable from records in the Department's registry or from the file itself. In the Lord Chancellor's Department the issue of a file is always recorded in writing.

Heysel Stadium Incident (Prosecutions)

Mr. Alton asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to the reply of the Solicitor-General to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill, of Friday 8 November, *Official Report*, column *293*, when he now expects to take a decision on whether to prosecute the 29 British subjects interviewed by Merseyside police in connection with the riot at Heysel stadium.

The Solicitor-General: No final decision will be taken by the Director of Public Prosecutions as to proceedings in this country until such time as the Belgian authorities have decided whether to request the extradition of any British subjects.

TRANSPORT

Mhairi L (Loss)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has now received the report of the inquiry into the loss of the Mhairi L; when he expects it to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Yes, the report has now been received and studied. It is not the practice to publish reports of this kind, but the facts will shortly be made available to interested parties.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total expenditure on roads during the financial year 1984-85.

Mrs. Chalker: The figures for roads in England are as follows:

Expenditure 1984-85

	Cash £m
Motorways and trunk roads	806
Local authority roads	*1,409
Total roads	2,215

* Provisional

Motorways

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's assessment of the efficacy of current speed limits on motorways in relation to *(a)* cars, *(b)* coaches and *(c)* heavy goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I am satisfied that the current speed limits are set at appropriate levels. The extent to which drivers comply with the limits was published in the 1983 and 1984 speed surveys and are available in the Library. I announced to the House on 15 November measures for the compulsory fitting of speed governors to coaches to ensure compliance with the speed limit.

Although motorways are our safest roads, safety must ultimately depend on the general standards of behaviour by all road users, of which compliance with the speed limits is only one part.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of motorway in England are currently lit; if he will break them down by motorway; how many miles of motorway are planned to be lit; of those miles lit, in the case of how many the lights were installed during construction of the motorway itself; in how many cases the lighting was installed separately after construction of the motorway itself; and what mileage was involved.

Mrs. Chalker: The trunk road motorway lighting information requested is as follows:

Motor way	*Length with lighting miles*	*Installed during construction miles*	*Installed after construction miles*
M1	68·0	5·0	63·0
M3	2·0	1·0	1·0
M4	26·3	3·8	22·5
M5	47·0	17·0	30·0
M6	56·0	21·0	35·0
M11	6·2	6·2	—
M20	1·6	1·3	0·3
M23	2·6	2·6	—
M25	41·0	38·5	2·5
M27	4·8	4·8	—
M40	1·0	1·0	—
M42	—	—	—
M53	18·3	17·6	0·7
M54	6·5	6·5	—
M55	1·3	1·3	—
M56	8·9	8·9	—
M57	0·5	0·5	—
M58	5·6	4·8	0·8
M61	3·0	3·0	—
M62	43·8	25·8	18·0
M63	13·7	8·7	5·0
M65	5·3	5·3	—
M66	2·6	2·6	—
M67	2·9	2·9	—
M180	1·1	1·1	—
M602	4·3	4·3	—
M621	2·2	—	2·2
Total	376·5	195·5	181·0

I am keeping the extent of motorway lighting under review, and at the moment approximately a further 45 miles are planned.

Titford Viaduct

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Transport what make, model and year are the 12 vehicles referred to in the reply of 15 November, *Official Report*, columns *331-32*; and what happens to them at the end of the contract.

Mrs. Chalker: The 12 vehicles provided for the use of the engineer's site staff are:

10—Peugeot 205's all B reg. (1984-85)
1—Austin Montego Estate C reg. (1985)
1—VW LT31 van B reg. (1984-85)

The future use of these vehicles after completion of the contract is a matter for the contractor.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any complaints have been received by the traffic commissioner for the metropolitan area regarding licensed persons driving tendered bus services for London Regional Transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I understand that the metropolitan traffic commissioners have no record of any such complaints.

Channel Link

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria of assessment of the standards required in preventing the spread of rabies in the consideration of proposals for a fixed Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: The requirement that promoters of a Channel fixed link must satisfy in respect of

preventing the spread of rabies are laid down in paragraph 44 of the "Invitation to Promoters", issued by the British and French Governments on 2 April, a copy of which was placed in the Library.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent assessment he has made of the infrastructure investment which will be required to be made from public funds in respect of the Channel link proposals; and if he will make a statement on the likely cost.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) on 11 November, at column 83.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the procedures through which members of the public and interested bodies should make known their views on the various proposals for fixed links across the Channel.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has advertised widely inviting public comment on the four schemes that we are considering. Any views received will be taken into account before a decision is reached. Additionally, members of the public can write to their MPs, who in due course will be asked to consider a Bill embodying any decision the French and British Governments may make.

Bus Grants

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the estimated financial savings, in each relevant financial year, of the phasing out of new bus grants.

Mr. Ridley: When the last Administration decided to phase out new bus grants in 1977, the annual cost was £43 million. It is impossible to say how many buses would have been brought into service had the grant rate remained at 50 per cent., and the saving from phasing out the grant cannot therefore be reliably estimated.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Visas

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Commonwealth and other foreign countries whose citizens enter the United Kingdom without visas, require visas to be obtained by United Kingdom citizens entering their territory.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

Commonwealth countries	*Foreign countries*
Australia	Guatemala
Bangladesh	USA
Ghana	Venezuela
India	
Maldives (issued on arrival)	
Nauru (issued on arrival)	
Nigeria	
Sierra Leone	

The table relates only to British citizens seeking entry for a temporary stay. For settlement, regulations differ from country to country. All Commonwealth and foreign nationals (other than from the European Community) require prior entry clearance if they wish to settle in the United Kingdom.

PRIME MINISTER

Miss Sarah Keays

Q24. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister on what date, and at what hour, staff at 10 Downing street were informed about the burglary at Miss Sarah Keays' sister's house in Battersea in November 1983.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

The burglary in question was dealt with entirely by the police, who saw no reason, either at the time or subsequently, to inform my right hon. Friend's staff about it.

Crime (Causation Factors)

Q56. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Prime Minister to what extent she attributes the causes of the increase in crime since 1979 to youth unemployment and bad housing; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

Extensive research has not yielded a clear or significant link between levels of unemployment and recorded crime. Other studies have shown that certain kinds of housing estates are particularly prone to crime and vandalism, but there is no evidence to suggest that poor physical conditions in themselves contribute to criminality.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Baldry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 21 November.

Mr. Biffen: I have been asked to reply.

This morning my right hon. Friend presided at a meeting of the Cabinet, and is now in Brussels for President Reagan's briefing of the NATO Council.

Rainbow Warrior

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister whether Her Majesty's Government lodged an official protest with the French Government concerning the bombing of the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior in New Zealand.

The Prime Minister: Her Majesty's ambassador in Paris delivered a note to the French Foreign Ministry on 24 September drawing attention to the fact that the

Rainbow Warrior was a British ship and urging swift compensation. A similar note was handed to the French ambassador in London on 25 September.

Hillsborough Summit

Mr. Peter Robinson asked the Prime Minister what is her best estimate of the cost of the Hillsborough summit on 15 November including the wages costs of security forces.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman shortly.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Trials (Tape Recording)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Leicestershire on the tape recording trials undertaken by Leicestershire constabulary; if he will call for reports from other relevant chief constables as to how those trials compare with the other areas of testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the tape recording trial in Leicester continues to go well. Police officers have continued to respond positively to the new procedures, and there have been no significant challenges to the authenticity of taped evidence. The early signs that tape recording may lead to an increase in the guilty plea rate have continued in Leicestershire; amongst other benefits, this is likely to reduce the number of occasions on which police officers have to attend court. The tape recording field trials are being monitored by the Home Office research and planning unit, and it will only be when all the tape recorded cases being monitored in the trials have been disposed of by the courts that a complete analysis of the data will be possible. The general picture emerging, however, is that the favourable impression of tape recording being gained from Leicestershire is shared in the other field trial areas.

Sufficient experience has been gained from the field trials already to enable plans to be made to begin the introduction of tape recording on a national basis. Preparations are in hand to start tape recording of interviews in nearly 30 further forces during the course of the coming year. It is our intention in the course of the year to issue a code of practice in connection with the tape recording of interviews.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps he intends to take to improve the methods of recording the results of trial or sentence;

(2) why the number of cases where the result of trial or sentence was not recorded rose from 3,038 in 1979 to 7,683 in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The outcome of court proceedings is comprehensively recorded for criminal statistics. However, the statistics referred to by the hon. Member, which are from table 2.4 of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales 1984", relate to the outcome of those court proceedings for those remanded in custody. That information is reported by prison department establishments and is always less complete for the most recent year when some cases will not have reached disposal. The latest year's figures will be revised in next year's publication, but the information will remain incomplete because prison department establishments may have difficulty in tracing the outcome of a case.

Prison Workshops

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he intends to take arising from the findings of the recently published report by the National Audit Office on debts and losses incurred in the management of prison workshops.

Mr. Mellor: The remedial measures being taken are described in some detail in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report.* They were announced in broad outline to the House by the then Home Secretary on 31 October 1984, at column 987, and include new machinery for central management of prison industries, a rolling four-year plan to determine future strategy and overall financial targets, and improvements in a range of managerial and financial controls. He also announced on 12 July 1985, at column 560, a review by the Prisons Board of how far prison industries were making a satisfactory contribution to providing worthwhile employment for prison inmates. We shall announce the outcome of this review in due course.

* Appropriation Accounts (volume 6: Class IX, 1984-1985 Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General Class IX Vote 8: Prisons, England and Wales (Home Office).

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the planned effects of the reorganisation of the Metropolitan police on *(a)* the four area robbery squads, *(b)* the area intelligence surveillance units, *(c)* the special patrol group, *(d)* the district support units, *(e)* district crime squads and *(f)* the district juvenile bureaux in relation to their number, location, function and strength.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the future roles and organisation of the squads and units mentioned are currently the subject of consultation within the force and, where appropriate, with community representatives. No decisions will be taken until these consultations have been completed.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide a breakdown of the current establishment and strength of the Metropolitan police *(a)* by division, *(b)* by area and *(c)* by rank in each division; and if he will identify ranked officers as uniformed or CID;

(2) if he will detail the location of the following specialist units within the Metropolitan police force following reorganisation; the central drugs squad, the anti-terrorist squad, the Metropolitan and City police fraud branch, the diplomatic protection group, the serious crimes squad, the flying squad, the No. 9 district regional crime squad, the criminal intelligence branch, the special branch, A8 central information unit, the central intelligence unit, the national identification bureaux, the public sector corruption index and the Metropolitan police laboratory; if he will give the strength of each branch, squad and unit, indicating officers by rank, uniformed and

CID function; and if he will give figures showing the strength of the civilian support staff allocated to each branch, squad and unit;

(3) how many civilian and uniformed staff are employed in the Metropolitan police public information department, press office and public relations department at the Metropolitan police headquarters; what rank and what grades they hold; how many officers are employed on similar work in each division and area; and if he will provide the total staff costs and force expenditure on public relations and promotional material for each year since 1979;

(4) how many civilians are employed by the Metropolitan police force in each division; if he will give details of the numbers by grade for each division; what is the basic salary for each grade; what are the average earnings for each grade; what is the value of fringe benefits for each grade; and what is the average overtime earned by each grade;

(5) if he will provide a staff breakdown by *(a)* Department and *(b)* rank located in the Metropolitan police headquarters and identify them as either uniformed or CID officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the titles of the branches and squads for which each of the four Metropolitan police departments is now responsible following reorganisation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis tells me that the branches and units which comprise the four Metropolitan police headquarters departments are as follows:

Territorial Operations Department

Branch	*Description*
A.2	Duties in divisions, operational requirements for police buildings; supervision, etc. neighbourhood policing.
A.3	Administration matters, courts, obscene publications, aliens deportation.
A.4	Firearms, shotguns, liquor licensing, animals, gaming.
A.5	Mounted branch.
A.6	Metropolitan special constabulary.
A.7	Race and community relations, juveniles, crime prevention.
A.8	Public order, ceremonials, operational support, dogs, forward planning unit.
A.9	Special patrol group.
A.10	Thames division.
B.1	Traffic secretariat.
B.2	Traffic management, road safety, and accident research.
B.3	Public carriage office.
B.4	Traffic legislation and process.
B.7	Traffic warden administration.
B.8	Traffic patrols and car pounds.
B.9	Central ticket office.
B.10	Transport.
B.11	Transport common services.

Specialist Operations Department

Branch	*Description*
R.D.P.D.	Royalty and diplomatic protection.
B.5	Crime report information system.
B.6	Communications, command and control; air support; computer liaison.
B.14	Miscellaneous force indices.
C.1	Serious crimes branch (including central drugs squad).
C.2	Case papers; correspondence.
C.3	Fingerprint, photographic and scenes of crime branch.
C.4	National identification bureau.
C.5	Crime policy, secretariat and legislation; Interpol.
C.6	Metropolitan and City police, company fraud department.
C.8	Central robbery squad.
C.11	Criminal intelligence branch.
C.12	Regional crime squad.
C. 13	Anti-terrorist branch.
	Special branch.
	M.P. forensic science laboratory.

Personnel and Training Department

Branch	*Description*
D.1	Recruitment (police).
D.2	Personnel (police).
D.3	Police welfare.
D.4	Married quarters, section houses.
D.5	Career planning, staff inspection, ethnic recruiting and equal opportunities.
D.6	Training administration.
D.7	Cadet training school.
D.8	Recruit training.
D.9	Detective training school.
D.10	Driver and telecommunications training.
D.11	Firearms training.
D.12	Metropolitan Police Publications.
D.13	Training Planning Unit.
D.14	Medical and Dental Branch.
D.15	Specialist Training.

Management Support Department

Force planning unit.
Policy analysis unit.
Policy committee secretariat.
Directorate of management services.
Complaints investigation bureau.
Directorate of public affairs.

The location of the functions of many of these branches is currently the subject of review and consultation as part of the force reorganisation. Some headquarters responsibilities will in due course be devolved to areas or divisions or transferred between headquarters departments.

Parole

Mr. Dickens asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what criteria parole is granted to prisoners with convictions involving violence, indecency, rape or neglect towards children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Under the provisions of section 60 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967 and section 35 of the Criminal Justice Act 1972, my right hon. Friend may release a prisoner on parole only if recommended to do so by the Parole Board or, in certain classes of cases agreed with the board, by local review committees, but he is not obliged to accept their recommendation. The criteria for selection for parole are set out in appendix I of the Parole Board's report for 1984, a copy of which is in the Library. They take account of the more restricted policy on parole for prisoners with sentences of over five years for offences of violence and drug trafficking announced by the then Home Secretary on 30 November 1983 which my right hon. Friend, too, is now following.

Mr. Dickens asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how members of local parole boards are selected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Local Review Committee Rules 1967, as amended by the Local Review Committee (Amendment) Rules 1973, stipulate that local review

committees shall consist of the governor of the prison with which the committee is associated and not less than four other members appointed by the Secretary of State; that the committee shall include among its members a probation officer who is not a prison welfare officer, a member of the board of visitors or visiting committee of the prison and two persons neither of whom is a probation officer or a member of that board; and that no member of the committee other than the governor of the prison shall be an officer of the prison. Within these criteria candidates for membership of local review committees are recruited and nominated for appointment by the Secretary of State by prison governors in accordance with guidelines set out in Prison Department circular instruction 58/1983, a copy of which is in the Library.

Electoral Registers

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will announce the scale of costs and availability via electoral registration officers of electoral registers in a computerised form.

Mr. Mellor: Regulations will shortly be laid before Parliament which, if approved, will provide for the supply of electoral registration data on payment of prescribed fees.

Civil Defence

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of costs incurred by local authorities on civil defence are grant-aided by his Department; and whether there is a ceiling on the amount of grant aid that can be made available to an individual local authority.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Local authorities are paid a grant of either 75 per cent or 100 per cent. of approved expenditure; the Civil Defence (Grant) (Amendment) Regulations 1983 specify the items eligible for 100 per cent. grant. Expenditure allocations eligible for civil defence grant are set annually for each county council and the GLC based on estimates of expenditure submitted to the Home Office. These may be adjusted during the course of the year to meet new requirements if grant funds are available.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many letters have been sent out to local authorities by Mr. Eric Alley, civil defence adviser to the Home Office, since 1 October; with which authorities Mr. Alley has engaged in correspondence; and if he will publish the text of all correspondence in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether letters sent out to local authorities by Mr. Eric Alley, civil defence adviser to the Home Office, are sent with his authorisation; and whether they represent the views of Ministers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The civil defence adviser, who has my full support, corresponds with local authorities for a variety of reasons and only in exceptional circumstances would a letter require specific authorisation.

Suspended Sentences

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of men given suspended sentences subsequently had them imposed in whole or part in the years 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: About a quarter of males aged 21 and over given a fully suspended sentence in 1983 or 1984 were subsequently sentenced to immediate custody for breach of the sentence. The available information is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (the latest issue is for 1984 — Cmnd. 9621) and in the supplementary tables. Details of persons given partly or fully suspended sentences of imprisonment are published in the supplementary tables, in vollume 1, table S1.1(A) for magistrates' courts and in voume 2, table S2.1(A) for the Crown court. Details of those dealt with for non-compliance with the terms of suspended sentences are published in tables 7.31 and 7.32 of the command paper for 1984 and discussed on page 143 of the commentary.

Detention Centre and Training

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many young males were sentenced to a period of detention centre, senior and junior, training in the period 1 January 1984 to 30 June 1984, 1 July 1984 to 31 December 1984 and 1 January 1985 to 30 June 1985, respectively;

(2) how many males were sentenced to periods of imprisonment in *(a)* junior detention centres and *(b)* senior detention centres during 1984 and the first and second quarters of 1985.

Mr. Mellor: Information on males initially received on sentence into junior and senior detention centres is given in the following table. The available information on males sentenced to detention centres in each calendar year is published annually in "Criminal Statistics England and Wales, Supplementary Tables"; in the issue for 1984 in volume 1, tables S1.1(C) and S1.1(D) for magistrates' courts, and in volume 2, tables S2.1(C) and S2.1(D) for the Crown court.

Initial receptions on sentence of males given detention centre orders by type of centre and date of reception 1 January 1984 to 30 June 1985

	Junior detention centres	*Senior detention centres*
1984		
1st half-year	2,466	3,540
2nd half-year	1,961	3,615
*1985**		
1st quarter	1,025	1,985
2nd quarter	1,145	1,940
1st half-year	2,170	3,925

* Provisional figures

Child Abuse

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons have been convicted in England and Wales of offences involving child abuse in each of the last five years; and if he will break the totals down by offence;

(2) how many persons have been convicted in England and Wales of offences involving the sexual abuse of children in each of the last five years; and if he will break the totals down by offence.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is brought together in the following table. For other types of offences of violence and sexual offences, the information collected centrally does not distinguish the age of the victim. Information on those offences marked with an asterisk is published annually in "Criminal Statistics England And Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 4" (tables S4.1(A) and S4.1(B) for 1984) which also includes information on cautions for these offences, (tables S4.1(C) and S4.1(D)).

Offenders aged 17 and over found guilty at all courts in England and Wales of certain violence against the person or sexual offences where the victim is known to be or could be aged 16 or under.

Number of persons

Offence	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Indictable offences						
Murder of infants under one year of age	1	—	—	—	1	—
Infanticide	7	7	9	3	8	6
Cruelty to or neglect of children	138	147	101	101	87	102
Abandoning child under two years*	1	2	1	1	2	1
Child stealing*	13	10	8	7	19	10
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	119	140	143	123	142	113
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	17	14	9	5	12	21
Indecent assault on a male person under 16 years	485	498	458	460	482	460
Indecent assault on females under 16 years of age	1,347	1,345	1,146	1,167	1,086	1,068
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 13*	77	94	69	59	92	72
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16*	620	525	454	388	393	393
Incest with a girl under 13	49	50	32	44	38	48
Inciting girl under 16 to have incestuous sexual intercourse	8	6	3	6	7	—
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16	6	5	7	7	3	6
Person responsible for girl under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution, etc.	3	3	4	3	4	3
Abduction of unmarried girl under 16	19	11	8	9	6	8
Gross indecency with children*	239	238	209	205	205	226
Summary offence						
Cruelty to or neglect of children*	4	4	5	10	1	1

ENERGY

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether steps have been taken to register the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive as a company.

Mr. Goodlad: In the 1982 White Paper on radioactive waste management (Cmnd. 8607) the Government announced their agreement that the component parts of the nuclear industry should, in co-operation, set up a Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive in order to provide a mechanism by which it could fulfil its responsibilities for nuclear waste disposal. NIREX has been functioning as an administrative entity for some time, and its current annual report is in the Library of the House.

My right hon. Friend has today agreed to the incorporation of NIREX as a company. The shares will be held by the Central Electricity Generating Board, British Nuclear Fuels Limited, the Atomic Energy Authority and the South of Scotland Electricity Board. Given the long-term nature of the company's business, and the Government's interest in continuity, my right hon. Friend is a holder of a special share. Taking account of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's recommendation that there should be independent directors on the NIREX board, the special share confers the right to appoint two independent directors. These appointments, which my right hon. Friend will make in consultation with the Secretaries of State for the Environment, Scotland and Wales, will be announced in due course.

The nuclear industry has committed itself wholeheartedly to the success of NIREX and this commitment is reflected in a formal shareholders agreement.

I am today making available in the Library of the House the shareholders agreement and attached documentation of the new company.

Hinkley Point B Power Station

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will name, list and describe the components and other materials, including liquids and gases, removed from the reactor pressure vessel at Hinkley Point B nuclear power station as a result of the accident on 25 October; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate the approximate volume of water that escaped into the reactor pressure vessel in the accident on 25 October at Hinkley Point B nuclear power station, and what were the times at which this escape of water *(a)* started and *(b)* was stopped;

(3) if he will name, list and describe any radioactive substances of any type which were released into the atmosphere as a result of the accident on 25 October at Hinkley Point B nuclear power station, either at the time of the accident or subsequently;

(4) if he will describe how the contaminated water was removed from the reactor pressure vessel at Hinkley Point

B nuclear power station following the accident on 25 October, stating whether it was filtered free of radionucledes as it was removed; and what were the levels of radioactivity of this contaminated water *(a)* before removal an *(b)* after removal.

Mr. Goodlad: As my right hon. Friend mentioned in his letter of 15 November to the hon. Member, the boiler tube leak at Hinkley Point B on 25 October was notified to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. Investigations subsequently confirmed that several hundred gallons of water entered the reactor gas coolant circuit. The boiler tube has been permanently plugged and the reactor was returned to power on 10 November. The NII, the Radiochemical Inspectorate and MAFF are satisfied that the radioactivity discharge was well within the authorised limits.

I am asking the CEGB to provide the hon. Member with the detailed information which he requests.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to reply to the letter dated 29 October from the hon. Member for Yeovil, asking for full details of the accident on 25 October at Hinkley Point B nuclear power station.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend replied on 15 November.

NCB Houses

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many houses owned by the National Coal Board were empty on 20 November;

(2) what is the number of empty houses owned by the National Coal Board area by area.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the National Coal Board. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept on individuals by the Lord Advocate's Department; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland:

a. *Computer Files*

Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House library.

b. *Manual Files*

Manual files on individual members of staff are open only to the personnel officers responsible for those staff and to other officers with a "specific need to know". Access to information on manual files kept on other individuals is confined to those authorised to have it for the purpose for which it is supplied. All officers are subject to the Official Secrets Acts. No specific access records are kept in respect of these.

WALES

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the unemployment percentage for men and women, respectively, for the Dwyfor area for the most recently available month together with figures for the corresponding month of each of the previous five years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Rates of unemployment are not calculated for districts, but the numbers of unemployed in Dwyfor were as follows:

	Men	*Women*
October 1985	1,144	522
October 1984	1,051	498
October 1983*	898	463

* The October 1983 figures are provisional until the new ward-based unemployment series is finalised.

As a result of changes in the unemployment series, comparable figures for earlier years are not available.

Jobcentres (Welsh Language)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the policy of his Department in relation to the use of the Welsh language for advertising in the local press by jobcentres in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I am informed by the Manpower Services Commission that jobcentres do not normally use paid advertising in the local press but that their policy overall is to use the Welsh language whenever practicable and appropriate in their own and other published material.

Welsh Consultative Committee

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the Commission for Racial Equality concerning the workings of the Welsh Consultative Committee.

Mr. Mark Robinson: None.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many miles of motorway in Wales are currently lit; if he will break them down by motorway; how many miles of motorway are planned to be lit; of those miles lit, in the case of how many the lights were installed during construction of the motorway itself; in how many cases the lighting was installed separately after construction of the motorway itself; and what mileage was involved.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The M4 is the only motorway in Wales. Eighteen miles are lit. Fifteen miles had lighting installed during construction and a further three miles had lighting installed as part of a subsequent road widening. The extent of motorway lighting is being kept under review, but there are no plans at present for further lighting.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for the Welsh water authority, in cash and real terms, since 1979, taking that as the base year *(a)* the water rate, *(b)* the percentage change in water rate, *(c)* the capital expenditure and *(d)* the percentage change in capital expenditure.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested for the Welsh water authority is as follows:

	£ million	Average domestic bill cash terms percentage difference	£ million	At 1979-80 prices percentage difference
1979-80	49·08		49·08	
1980-81	60·38	23·0	51·91	5·8
1981-82	66·76	10·6	51·53	(0·7)
1982-83	*81·34	18·4	*58·55	13·6
1983-84	86·35	6·2	59·41	1·5
1984-85	92·77	7·4	60·76	2·3
1985-86	103·91	12·0	64·51	6·2

* The average rateable value was increased from £120 to £124 to more accurately reflect the actual average in the Welsh water authority's area.

	£ million	Capital expenditure cash terms percentage difference	£ million	At 1979-80 prices percentage difference
1979-80	34·9	—	34·9	—
1980-81	38·5	10·3	31·0	(11·3)
1981-82	46·4	20·5	37·0	19·5
1982-83	55·9	20·5	45·3	22·5
1983-84	50·8	(10·6)	40·7	(10·2)
1984-85	41·3	(17·4)	32·8	(19·4)
1985-86 Est.	53·4	29·3	40·3	22·9

SOCIAL SERVICES

Birth Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the proportion of live births by caesarian section to normal live births for each regional health authority.

Mr. Whitney: The latest available information from the hospital in-patient inquiry (maternity) is shown in the table.

The first column *(a)* shows the ratio of the number of live births by caesarian section to the number of live births with a spontaneous delivery (that is with no mention of manipulation or instrumentation) in a completely normal case, with no mention of any complication ante- or post-natally.

The second ratio *(b)* is the number of live births by caesarean section to all live births with a spontaneous delivery, irrespective of mention of any complication.

All live births by forceps, vacuum, breech and with abnormal presentation of head have been excluded from columns *(a)* and *(b)*.

Column *(c)* shows the ratio of the number of live births by caesarean section to all live births.

In a multiple birth with at least one birth by caesarean section, all the births are counted as caesarean sections. Births by caesarean section include those done electively, in emergency cases and for other reasons, but none is regarded as a delivery in a completely normal case.

The figures are derived from data on maternal discharges from a one in 10 sample of in-patient records from maternity units of National Health Service (NHS) non-psychiatric hospitals in England, and do not include, therefore, births occurring in private hospitals, at home or elsewhere.

Ratios of live births by caesarean section to 'normal' live births NHS Hospitals by region of mother's residence 1983 (Provisional) England

Regional health authority of mother's usual residence	(a) Ratio of caesareans to births with delivery in completely normal case	(b) Ratio of caesareans to all births by spontaneous delivery	(c) Ratio of caesareans to all live births
Northern	0·200	0·116	0·091
Yorkshire	0·193	0·119	0·092
Trent	0·305	0·137	0·099
East Anglian	0·220	0·149	0·107
North West Thames	0·266	0·157	0·112
North East Thames	0·221	0·132	0·101
South East Thames	0·207	0·126	0·093
South West Thames	0·270	0·154	0·113
Wessex	0·225	0·126	0·096
Oxford	0·316	0·118	0·089
South Western	0·260	0·147	0·104
West Midlands	0·373	0·110	0·086
Mersey	0·192	0·154	0·112
North Western	0·276	0·138	0·106

Blood Donors

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many blood donors there are in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: During 1984 over 2,513,000 blood donations were collected in the United Kingdom. Frequency of donation varies. Records of the number of donors are not kept centrally.

Blood Stocks

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps are now taken to seek to ensure that blood stocks are not contaminated with AIDS virus.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since 14 October 1985, all blood donations collected by the National Blood Transfusion Service (NBTS) have been tested for HTLV III antibody.

All untested stocks of blood and blood components have been recalled from hospitals by the NBTS. Where testing and reissue is impracticable, such stocks will not be used for transfusion purposes.

The Department has also revised its warning leaflet, now entitled "AIDS—important information for blood donors", and this is being distributed by the NBTS to all its donors individually. The leaflet re-emphasises that those in AIDS high-risk groups should not donate blood.

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what steps have been taken since Dr. Mark Patterson's convictions in 1984 to seek to ensure that blood taken from donors is not misappropriated;

(2) what quantity of blood is held by the national blood transfusion services central and regional depots; and what steps are now taken to monitor its use.

Mr. Hayhoe: The national blood transfusion service (NBTS) is regionally organised; records are not held centrally of operational stock levels at regional transfusion centres or at hospital blood banks.

In March 1984, guidance was issued to health authorities on improving standards of record keeping and stock control for hospital blood banks. This complemented the existing arrangements within the NBTS itself. The guidance also required health authorities to review regularly the usage of blood within their hospitals to ensure its optimum use.

Issue of this guidance preceded Dr. Patterson's conviction in July 1984, and was intended to counter the weaknesses which this case disclosed.

Illegal Blood Sales

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether steps have been taken to retrieve the estimated profit of £158,000 made by the conspirators on the sale of blood in 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. The health authority concluded that it was unlikely to recover even the costs to them of pursuing the recovery in the courts.

Age Addition

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are currently in receipt of the age addition; and what is the anticipated increase in eligibility over each of the next 10 years.

Mr. Major: At March 1984 some 1,670,000 people over age 80 in Great Britain were in receipt of age addition.

It is estimated that numbers over the next 10 years will be as follows:

	Number
1985-86	1,710,000
1986-87	1,760,000
1987-88	1,810,000
1988-89	1,870,000
1989-90	1,910,000
1990-91	1,960,000
1991-92	1,990,000
1992-93	2,030,000
1993-94	2,070,000
1994-95	2,100,000

Social Security Tribunals

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all current vacancies on social security tribunals.

Mr. Major: This is a matter for the president of social security appeal tribunals, His Honour Judge John Byrt, QC, and the hon. Member may care to approach him.

Gillick Case (Costs)

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total cost to date to his Department of all stages of the legal proceedings involving Gillick v West Norfolk and Wisbech area health authority and the Department of Health and Social Security.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available.

"Reform of Social Security"

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received representations on the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" from the Society for the Prevention of Asbestosis and Industrial Diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The society wrote to the Department on 12 and 16 September. We have noted its observations and will take full account of them.

Blind Persons

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many registered blind people are over state retirement age.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However at 31 March 1982, the latest date for which information — which is collated triennially—is available, the number of registered blind people over 65 years of age in England was 84,852. Further information about the breakdown into age groups can be obtained from the Department's publication 'Registered Blind and Partially Sighted Persons at 31 March 1982 England' a copy of which is available in the Library.

Limited List Prescribing

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if every doctor under contract with the National Health Service was sent a letter from his Department in advance of the decision to introduce a limited list for National Health Service prescriptions.

Mr. Hayhoe: On 14 December 1984 the Chief Medical Officer wrote to all doctors setting out the Government's proposals to introduce a selected list of drugs and inviting comments on the contents of the provisional list. Once the consultation period was over, the Chief Medical Officer wrote to them again, on 28 February 1985, with details of the proposed final form of the selected list. When the regulations introducing the schedule of products not prescribable under the National Health Serive were laid, doctors received notification of their content, either from a health circular sent to all health authorities or from a family practitioner notice sent to all general medical practitioners.

Ambulance Service (Salary Structure)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has for a new national salary structure for ambulance men; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: This is a matter for the Ambulance Whitley council. The management side of that council has offered to introduce a salaried structure for ambulance men and women and awaits the trade union side's response.

Nicholas Laboratories

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reach a decision on the appeal by Nicholas Laboratories for Polycrol Gel and Polycrol Forte Gel to become available again on National Health Service prescriptions.

Mr. Hayhoe: The advice of the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs in respect of Polycrol Gel is under consideration and a decision will be made shortly. I understand that no submission has been received by the Committee in respect of Polycrol Forte Gel.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations his Department has now received opposing the effects on young people of the board and lodgings regulations' time limits.

Mr. Newton: The Department has received a substantial volume of correspondence on the board and lodgings regulations. Our records do not enable us to identify representations on particular aspects of the regulations separately.

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what proportion of young people claiming board and lodgings benefit have moved to a different area when their benefit entitlement, under the board and lodgings regulations, expired;

(2) what proportion of young people claiming board and lodgings benefits have remained at the same address but have changed their benefit status to that of householder;

(3) what proportion of young people claiming board and lodgings benefit have returned to their parental home when their benefit entitlement under the board and lodgings regulations expired.

Mr. Newton: A survey of 2,350 claimants in the south east carried out between June and August 1985 showed that some 5 per cent. of the claimants concerned moved to a different local office area (not necessarily to a different board and lodging area). A similar proportion remained at the same address and changed their benefit status to householder, compared with over 28 per cent. who stayed at the same address as non-householders. This study did not identify separately claimants who returned to their parental homes. A much smaller study in Scotland found that about one-third of people who changed their address following reassessment returned to live with parents and a further sixth moved to friends, or other relatives. Most of the rest became householders. Indications from local offices generally support the broad findings of these studies.

Child Benefit

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of single mothers who have withdrawn claims for child benefit in each single year since 1979, the number of case papers which have been requested from benefit officers' staff by social security fraud squad officers in each single year since 1979; and if he will list the total number of officers who have been employed by his Department as fraud squad investigators during the same period giving a breakdown of the regions of the country to which they have been assigned.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the saving in public expenditure would be if child benefit was paid at full-rate to people earning up to £100 per week and at half-rate to people earning between £100 and £150 per week and no child benefit when earnings exceed £150 per week.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to the reply*, 14 November, 1985, c. *286*]: The information is not available as requested. Based on families' gross earnings at the levels quoted, the net saving of child benefit (including one parent benefit) would be about £3 billion. There would be considerable extra administration costs arising from the need to subject the 7 million families receiving child benefit to an incomes test.

Coldeast Hospital, Hampshire

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the future of Coldeast hospital, Hampshire.

Mr. Whitney: We have received representations only from the League of Friends of the hospital.

Natural Medicines

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which organisations his Department calls upon for advice about natural medicines.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department's main sources of advice are the Committee on the Review of Medicines and the Medicines Commission. In addition we have had helpful contact with professional bodies, trade associations and individual manufacturers of alternative medicines.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in his Department have expertise in natural medicines.

Mr. Hayhoe: The professional staff employed in the Department who are concerned with the licensing of medicines comprise doctors, pharmacists and scientists who apply their professional training and skills to questions of safety, efficacy and quality in relation to medicines of all descriptions. Their special expertise lies not in particular forms of treatment but in evaluation of whether the conditions for public sale or supply of medicines, under the provisions of the Medicines Act 1968, are met.

As work on the licensing of alternative medicines increases a number of the Department's doctors, pharmacists and scientists become familiar with the particular problems of alternatve medicines in this licensing context. In addition, our Medicines Act committees include three members with expertise in the pharmacy of plants. These Committees are also able to call on additional advice from expert sources as necessary.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider setting up an advisory committee for natural medicines.

Mr. Hayhoe: No as this matter has been considered and I endorse the conclusion that such an advisory committee is not required.

Deafness

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in England and Wales suffered

complete loss of hearing as a result of trauma in the last year for which figures are available; and what facilities for rehabilitation and training are available for them.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that the statistics requested are not available centrally. We encourage a multi-disciplinary approach to the problems encountered by traumatically deafened people and many disciplines, such as hearing therapists, speech therapists and specialist social workers may be involved in their rehabilitation and training. The full range of the Manpower Services Commission's rehabilitation and training facilities are also available to deaf and partially hearing people. In the voluntary sector, the Link centre for deafened people is able to offer specialised residential assistance.

Departmental Offices (Camden)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the staffing levels of his Department's offices in Camden, particularly at Melton street.

Mr. Major: The staffing of the Department's local offices which deal with claimants in Camden is as follows and has been determined in accordance with the Department's complementing system, which aims to match the numbers of staff to the work load. A full complement review was begun on 14 October 1985 to reappraise the base complement for the Department and its results will be available in mid-1986 'A Guide to the DHSS Complementing System' giving details of complementing arrangements is in the Library.

Office	*Complement 1985-86*	*Staff in post 1 November 1985*
Euston (Melton St)	160	172·5
Cricklewood	87	99
Finsbury Park	183	198
Highgate	190	210
Neasden	147	148·5

Mr. J. Lowry

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when the case of Mr. J. Lowry of 62 Parkhill avenue, Rusholme, Manchester was first referred by the local office of his Department to him for a decision concerning an ex-gratia payment;

(2) when he expects to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Stretford of 8 October concerning Mr. J. Lowry.

Mr. Major: The case of Mr. Lowry was first received by officials for consideration of an ex-gratia payment on 4 March. I hope to be able to give the hon. Member a full reply to his letter of 8 October shortly.

Heating Addition

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the criteria for designating properties as eligible for estate rate heating addition; and which officers within each of his Department's regions or offices are responsible for identifying properties as eligible for estate rate heating addition.

Mr. Newton: Estate rate heating additions are payable to supplementary benefit claimants who are householders where the home is part of an estate with a heating system of which my right hon. Friend has in his discretion recognised the running costs to be disproportionately high. The factors taken into account in deciding whether or not to recognise particular heating systems are set out in paragraphs 4293-4296 of the 'S' manual of staff guidance, a copy of which is in the Library.

Following the introduction of the present scheme for estate rate heating additions in August 1982, all local offices were asked to identify estates with heating systems which might qualify, consulting fuel boards and landlords as necessary. We also enlisted the help of the local authority associations, which circulated their members with details of the policy, and a press release was issued. These measures have produced a large response from our own local offices, local authorities and other interested bodies. The local officers involved would vary from office to office but would be drawn from those dealing with supplementary benefit. Decisions on whether or not to recognise particular heating systems as disproportionately expensive are taken on behalf of my right hon. Friend by officials in the Department's headquarters.

Chlamydia

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what resources are devoted to research into and cure of chlamydia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: In January 1985 the Department commissioned a study of chlamydia trachomatis in the female genital tract, at a cost of £65,000 over two years at University College hospital, London. Studies of the epidemiology of chlamydial diseases are also being undertaken by the social medicine and health services research unit, United Medical and dental schools of Guy's and St. Thomas' hospitals, which is funded from the Department's health and personal social services research budget.

I understand that the Medical Research Council, which receives an annual grant-in-aid from the Department of Education and Science and which is the main government-funded agency for the promotion of medical research, is funding a number of projects which may be relevant to chlamydial infections.

Medical Accidents

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will take steps to introduce no-fault compensation for victims of medical accidents.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans for changing the present system whereby compensation for victims of medical accidents depends upon proof of negligence in a court of law.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claimants requiring medical examination in order to establish eligibility for benefit have been referred to consultants in each district health authority in England and Wales and in each health board in Scotland in the last year.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the terms under which consultants undertake for his Department medical examinations in order to establish the eligibility of those claiming benefit.

Mr. Hayhoe: Consultants may be asked to examine claimants for benefit on an ad hoc basis which is outside their normal contractual commitments to their health authority. Under their terms and conditions of service (copies of which are in the Library), they are entitled to charge a fee for such work, which is known as category II work and for which there is an established scale of fees based on the National Health Service fees recommended by the Doctors and Dentists Review Body. We are currently reviewing the operation, costs and benefits of the category II arrangements.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a claimant who refuses to attend a private hospital or clinic to which he is referred for a medical examination, to establish eligibility for benefit, is automatically asked to attend a National Health Service hospital instead; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Claimants are referred to a consultant for medical examination. The place of the examination is entirely a matter for the consultant concerned. Should a claimant object to a particular consultant, alternative arrangements can be considered.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost to his Department of fees paid to consultants for undertaking medical examinations in order to establish the eligibility of those claiming benefit.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, since our central records of fees paid do not distinguish between GPs and consultants.

National Insurance Contribution

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent remuneration of employees by way of profit-sharing is exempt from employers' and employees' national insurance contributions.

Mr. Major: Profits distributed by way of bonuses form part of normal earnings and are therefore liable for national insurance contributions. The Social Security (Contributions) Regulations 1979 specify conditions under which profits distributed through trust funds or certain profit-sharing schemes are disregarded for the purposes of National Insurance contributions.

Social Security Adjudication

Mr. Lewis Stevens asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will make available the first report of the Chief Adjudication Officer on the standards of social security adjudication; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The report is being published today. Its publication follows from the provisions of the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act, 1983, which sought to improve the quality of social security adjudication by various measures, including the requirement for the Chief Adjudication Officer to report annually on standards. We are grateful to the Chief Adjudication Officer for the efforts which he and his staff have put into it.

The report acknowledges that the period it covers was one of added difficulties for the social security system, stemming from the disputes in the coal mining industry and at the Department's computer centre at Newcastle. It makes a number of constructive suggestions which we shall consider carefully.

In the Government's view, many of the problems to which the report draws attention reflect the wider difficulties of a social security system which is often complex and confusing for both claimants and staff. We believe that our proposals for reform and simplification will make an important contribution to the continued improvement of adjudication standards which is our aim.

Dental Estimates Board (Computer)

Mr. Bellingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether a decision has been reached on the replacement of the computer at the Dental Estimates Board.

Mr. Whitney: We have authorised replacement of the Dental Estimates Board's present ICL computer. Consultants have advised the Board on the equipment needed both to maintain present systems and to provide a foundation for future developments. Because of the need for the new computer to support the present software in parallel with the development of new and improved systems the replacement computer is being purchased from ICL, and a contract for new hardware worth £2.2 million to be delivered progressively up to October 1986 was signed by the board on 15 November 1985. Together with software and services the total contract over five years will amount to £4 million.

The new computer systems will enable dentists' claims for payment to be processed more efficiently and pave the way for future developments such as electronic transmission of claims. They should also improve the capacity of the board to monitor claims for any fraud and abuse by carrying out more routine checks automatically and enabling staff to concentrate on serious cases where there is cause for concern.

Computer replacement and development at the board form a significant part of the wider strategy for using computers in family practitioner services administration. As this and other parts of the strategy are implemented, administrative efficiency in the family practitioner services will be increased and will provide a better base for further improvements in patient care.

Finer Report

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the recommendations of the Finer report have been implemented.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to the reply*, 18 November 1985, c. 89.]: The Finer report contained 230 recommendations. Of the 134 which affected the Department of Health and Social Security, 56 have been implemented and 78 rejected. Those rejected were concerned, in the main, with the introduction of a guaranteed maintenance allowance.

CIVIL SERVICE

External Appointments

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is his policy regarding the filling of posts by candidates from outside the Civil Service at grade 6 level and above; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The great majority of Civil Service posts at grade 6 level and above are filled from within the service. Exceptions are made where particular skills and experience are required which are not available internally.

SCOTLAND

Forestry

25. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will take steps to promote an increase in the acreage devoted to forestry.

Mr. John MacKay: The Government's policy for forestry continues to be based on the statement made to the House by my right hon. Friend on 10 December 1980. This envisaged a continuing expansion of forestry, with the private sector undertaking a greater share. In the four years to 31 March 1985, a total of some 91,000 hectares of new planting was carried out by private forestry interests under the Forestry Commission's grant-aid schemes and by the commission itself.

Rural Workshops Scheme

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many applications for financial assistance have been received under the rural workshops scheme;

(2) how many applications for financial assistance have been accepted under the rural workshops scheme;

(3) what is the total value of assistance approved under the rural workshops scheme.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Of 60 applications received by the Scottish Development Agency, 44, involving offers of £372,161, have so far been approved.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police authorities in Scotland have plastic bullets in store; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: No Scottish police force at present holds baton rounds (otherwise known as plastic bullets).

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway in Scotland are currently lit; if he will break them down by motorway; how many miles of motorway are planned to be lit; of those miles lit, in the case of how many the lights were installed during construction of the motorway itself; in how many cases the lighting was installed separately after construction of the motorway itself; and what mileage is involved.

Mr. Ancram: The following lengths of motorway in Scotland are currently lit.

	Miles
*M8	18·5
*M9	0·5
M73	2·0
M74	0·4
*M90	0·6
	22·0

Lighting was installed during construction on those lengths, totalling 19·6 miles, marked with an asterisk; the remainder, totalling 2·4 miles, had lighting installed after construction. It is planned to provide lighting on about 5 miles of the existing M74 motorway and, during construction, on a planned new 3-mile section of M74 and a planned new 4-mile section of the proposed M80.

Dounreay (Processing Plant)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he applied in determining that there provisions of section 45(2)*(b)* of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 were not satisfied in respect of the planning application to build a reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. Friend has no grounds for believing that the proposed development has such unfamiliar technical or scientific aspects that he cannot properly determine the application through the means he has adopted, which include the appointment of a reporter to hold a public inquiry under section 267 of the Act and of a technical assessor to assist him.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any official of his Department will present evidence of Government policy to the local public inquiry into the proposed reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Mr. Ancram: An official of the Scottish Development Department will present evidence on radioactive waste management policy at the inquiry. In addition, an official of Her Majesty's Industrial Pollution Inspectorate will give evidence on the regulatory framework which controls the disposal of radioactive wastes. Written statements by each of these bodies are being submitted to the chief reporter and should be available to the public within the next few days.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria he applied in determining that the provisions of section 45(2)*(a)* of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1972 were not satisfied in respect of the planning application to build a reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Mr. Younger: I have no grounds for believing that the application raises considerations of national or regional importance relevant to of whether I should grant planning permission, which cannot be properly evaluated through the procedures I have already adopted. These procedures include calling in the application for my decision and the holding of a public local inquiry under section 267 of the Act.

Hearing Loss (Trauma)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland suffered complete or

virtually complete loss of hearing as a result of trauma, in the last year for which figures are available; and what facilities for rehabilitation and training are available for them.

Mr. Younger: I regret that the information is not held centrally. A multi-disciplinary approach is encouraged to the rehabilitation and training of those who have suffered a loss of hearing from whatever cause. This can involve audiometricians, speech therapists, social workers and other specialist services. The Manpower Services Commission's full range of rehabilitation and training facilities is available to the deaf and partially-hearing. In the voluntary sector, the link centre for deafened people is able to offer specialised residential assistance.

SDA Funding (Lothian)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why he has refused funding from the Scottish Development Agency to Gorgie road railway bridge, and Pilrig Dalmery church, and other projects in Lothian; and what assessment he has made of consequential job losses in Lothian.

Mr. Allan Stewart: It is for the Scottish Development Agency to determine whether individual land renewal projects merit sufficient priority to receive funding in any particular financial year. I understand that the agency has decided to defer meantime a number of schemes, including the two mentioned. There were 3,425 confirmed redundancies in Lothian in 1984, and the provisional figure for January to August 1985 is 2,777.

Medical Accidents (Compensation)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will take steps to introduce no-fault compensation for victims of medical accidents in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: No. Questions of compensation are for the courts to decide, if a settlement cannot be agreed between the parties.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the further confirmed cases of legionnaire's disease in Glasgow, he will now institute a public inquiry into the outbreak; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The environmental health department of Glasgow district council and the Greater Glasgow health board are already conducting a full investigation into the cases of legionnaire's disease at Roystonhill. The report of this investigation will be carefully studied, but on the information presently available I do not think that a public inquiry is called for.

Greater Glasgow Health Board

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients, whose permanent address was outwith the area covered by the Greater Glasgow health board, received treatment at hospitals or clinics controlled by the Greater Glasgow health board in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The table shows for the years 1979 to 1983 (the latest available year) the number of patients discharged from inpatient care in non-psychiatric hospitals in the Greater Glasgow health board area, whose normal place of residence lay outwith the board's area or was not known.

	Number
1979	38,109
1980	39,914
1981	41,339
1982	38,306
1983	43,808

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed by the Greater Glasgow health board in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984; and in what categories.

Mr. John MacKay: The number of people employed by Greater Glasgow health board during the periods in question is set out in the table.

Staff groups	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Medical and Dental	1,879·0	1,869·6	1,929·7	1,953·0	1,977·7	1,975·2
All Nursing	14,098·8	14,977·4	15,880·5	15,856·1	15,449·7	15,394·8
All Scientific and PSM	1,111·2	1,148·6	1,197·8	1,218·7	1,245·3	1,296·4
Technical	1,569·3	1,577·0	1,626·4	1,613·2	1,671·3	1,683·6
Works	106·0	111·0	109·0	116·0	118·0	121·0
Administrative and Clerical	3,423·3	3,416·3	3,526·9	3,558·8	3,615·7	3,637·9
Ancillary	7,247·0	7,208·7	7,212·1	7,104·9	6,822·6	6,664·5
Tradesmen	807·2	835·0	831·2	842·2	838·0	838·0
Pharmacists and Opticians	146·6	147·3	151·1	153·6	155·0	153·7
All Staff	30,388·4	31,290·9	32,464·7	32,416·5	31,893·5	31,765·1

Note:
The figures are shown in terms of whole-time equivalent
PSM = Professions supplementary to medicine

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of outpatients treated in hospitals controlled by the Greater Glasgow health board in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows outpatient attendances at hospitals and clinics in the Greater Glasgow

health board area in the financial years 1979-80 to 1984-85, and includes accident and emergency cases and day patient attendances.

	Number
1979-80	2,735,481
1980-81	2,776,023
1981-82	2,794,271
1982-83	2,628,598
1983-84	2,789,294
1984-85	2,823,710

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of inpatients treated in hospitals controlled by the Greater Glasgow health board in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of patients discharged from inpatient treatment in hospitals in the Greater Glasgow health board area in the financial years 1979-80 to 1984-85.

	Number
1979-80	188,314
1980-81	194,786
1981-82	194,943
1982-83	177,209
1983-84	198,242
1984-85	199,507

Hospitals (Patient Costs)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the factors used in calculating the average cost per National Health Service patient in hospitals in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Figures in "Scottish Health Service Costs" are expressed in terms of cost per weighted patient day for each hospital. This is arrived at by apportioning a hospital's running costs (which exclude laboratory costs and some other ancillary costs) over the total patient activity in the hospital (that is inpatients and, on a weighted basis, outpatients, day patients, accident and emergency cases and day cases).

Cervical Smears

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the average time taken from collection of cervical smears to the result being given to the referring doctor or clinic in each of the health boards in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Outpatient Appointments

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the average waiting times for outpatient appointments for each medical category in each health board in Scotland in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

National Health Service

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make available additional resources to health boards in Scotland equal to the cost of funding pay increases awarded recently by Health Service pay review boards;

(2) if he will make a statement on the implications of the autumn statement for the level of the National Health Service budget in Scotland for 1985-86; and if he will express his answer in both absolute and percentage terms.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend has no plans to make any change to the level of provision for the health programme in the current year. He will announce shortly decisions about the allocation of resources to his programmes, including health, for future years.

Child Abuse

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons have been convicted in Scotland of offences involving child abuse in each of the last five years; and if he will break the totals down by offence.

Mr. John MacKay: The age of the victims of crimes and offences is not recorded in the statistics collected by the Scottish Home and Health Department. However, some of the categories in the classification of crimes and offences used in the statistics relate specifically to some form of child abuse. Figures for those categories are given in the table.

Persons with charge proved, Scotland

Crime or offence	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Cruelty (neglect etc.) to and unnatural treatment of children	236	179	179	193	191
Child stealing	6	1	—	—	3
Exposing children under 7 years to risk of burning	—	—	—	2	2
Children and young Persons legislation*	144	83	51	33	20
Employment of children offences	73	24	7	28	19
Drunk in charge of a child	29	29	22	41	35

* Includes sections 32 and 34 of Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons have been convicted in Scotland of offences involving the sexual abuse of children in each of the last five years; and if he will break the totals down by offence.

Mr. John MacKay: The age of the victims of crimes and offences is not included in the statistics on court proceedings collected by the Scottish Home and Health Department. However, two of the categories in the classification of crimes and offences used in the statistics

relate specifically to some form of sexual abuse of children. Figures for these categories are given in the table.

Persons with charge proved, Scotland.

Crime	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Defilement of girl under 13 years	12	1	1	2	2
Defilement of girl aged 13, 14 and 15	87	64	59	73	69

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Outgoers Scheme

14. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total amount of milk surrendered under the outgoers scheme; and if he will make a statement.

21. **Mr. Knox** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the present position concerning the outgoers scheme for dairy farmers.

Mr. Gummer: By 15 November, 1,639 producers had committed themselves to surrender some 277 million litres of quota under the outgoers scheme in England and Wales. A further 13 producers offering just over 3 million litres are currently interested in joining the scheme.

17. **Mr. Strang** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the European Community Commission's proposed new outgoers scheme for milk producers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin).

Pig Farmers

15. **Mr. Shersby** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to minimise the regulatory burden now applying to small swill feed pig farmers.

Mrs. Fenner: It is in the general interests of the livestock industry that strict animal health rules are maintained both in relation to swill feeders and others to ensure that the risk of spreading disease is minimised.

Conservation

16. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he is making to the research report published by the Council for the Protection of Rural England and the Council for National Parks entitled "How to Help Farmers and Keep England Beautiful", a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: We have only recently received a copy of this report, which we are still studying.

Wheat (Machineability Test)

18. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he plans to raise with his Common Market counterparts the application of the machineability test to British wheat and its stringency, so as to permit export of grain from intervention stocks to famine-stricken areas of Third world countries.

Mr. Gummer: My officials have raised the question of the irrelevance of the machineability test to food aid actions on very many occasions in recent years, but have received little support from other member states which have no difficulty in meeting this standard. There is little prospect of its being changed for food aid purposes, but this requirement has not hindered the Community's ability to provide food aid.

Severe Weather Payments

19. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to give additional financial assistance to the agriculture industry during the winter months.

20. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to assist farmers following the recent summer weather.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro).

Pelagic Fisheries

22. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the current operation of pressure stock licensing arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I have nothing further to add at this stage to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) earlier.

Potato Industry (Northern Ireland)

23. **Rev. Ian Paisley** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to assist the potato industry of Northern Ireland after the bad summer weather.

Mr. Gummer: Northern Ireland potato prices are reasonably firm at present, but market support in the form of a stockfeed scheme could be introduced later in the season if the trend in market prices showed this to be necessary.

Advisory and Research Services

24. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the closure of Ministry of Agriculture research units.

Mr. Jopling: As announced on 11 October 1985, four Agricultural Development and Advisory Service laboratories will close from 1 April 1986 as part of the planned reduction in ADAS expenditure in 1986-87 on research and development. I shall arrange for a copy of the announcement to be printed in the *Official Report*.

Following is the announcement:

October 11, 1985

ADAS R AND D—EXPENDITURE CUTS

Research and development spending by the Agriculture Development and Advisory Service—ADAS—will be reduced by some £4 million in 1986-87. This is in line with earlier decisions to reduce Government expenditure on agricultural research and development.

This will be achieved by rationalising the organisation of ADAS's R & D and concentrating work on fewer sites. This approach is intended to maintain ADAS's capability to respond to advice on the longer term priorities for R & D which the priorities board is considering, and to respond to the needs of industry as expressed through the financial contributions which the Government consider the industry should make towards the cost of R & D from which it benefits. It has been endorsed by the priorities board.

As part of these economies the Agricultural Science Service laboratories at Shardlow hall, Derby; Llanishen, Cardiff; and Bangor; and the Department of the Central Veterinary Laboratory located as Lasswade, Edinburgh, will close from April 1, 1986. The arrangements for maintaining the essential services needed in the areas concerned in future will be announced later.

About 200 ADAS and support staff are employed at these laboratories. Some of these staff can be redeployed, and a number of job losses can be achieved by natural wastage, but the total cannot be achieved without some redundancies. The staff are being informed, and their staff associations consulted as appropriate on the implementation of these decisions. It is not possible at this stage to state the number or location of redundancies which will be necessary.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the statutory services provided by the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, stating in each case *(a)* the annual cost of statutory work, *(b)* the revenue currently yielded by existing charges, *(c)* whether he intends to seek to increase existing charges or introduce new charges in respect of that service and *(d)* what additional revenue he expects to result from the extension of charges.

Mr. Jopling: As regards the range of statutory functions of my Department which are performed wholly or partly by ADAS, and the cost and revenue of those functions, I would refer the hon. Member to the report "Ministerial Information in MAFF (MINIM) 1985", copies of which are now in the Library of the House. The areas of statutory work for which I intend to introduce charges or increase charges were detailed in my written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) on 7 November, which, together with the proposed charges for advisory services, are expected to yield additional revenue of about £11 million in 1987-88.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the total number of staff in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, the number in each of the four constituent services and the number engaged in front-line advisory work in each year since 1979.

Mr. Jopling: The numbers of staff in each Service were as follows:

	Agriculture Service	*Agricultural Science Service*	*Land and Water Service*	*State Veterinary Service*	*Central Units*	*Total*	*Front line advisers*
1 April 1979	1,798	1155½	788	1,669½	52	5,463	1,601
1 April 1980	1,789	1,190½	789½	1,655	25	5,449	1,641
1 April 1981	1,753½	1,168	771½	1,585	22	5,300	1,721
1 April 1982	1,647½	1,165	704½	1,519½	21	5,057½	1,501
1 April 1983	1,639	1,131	638½	1,468½	12	4,889	1,439
1 April 1984	1,631	1,137½	587	1,448	10	4,813½	1,395
1 April 1985	1,619	1,141½	593	1,422	11	4,786½	1,409

Notes:

1. Part-time staff are counted as a half.
2. The former land service and land drainage service were amalgamated in 1981.
3. "Front line advisers" has been interpretated as meaning ADAS staff in regular direct contact with the farming and horticulture industry. Figures are therefore based on totals of regional and divisional staff of the agricultural service and the land and water service whose duties are primarily advisory. Back-up advice, including laboratory analytical and diagnostic services, is also provided by the agricultural science service and, through veterinary practitioners, by the state veterinary service, whose staff are not included in the figures given above.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many advisers employed in the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service are specialists in *(a)* conservation and *(b)* the diversification of farm businesses.

Mr. Jopling: There is no group of ADAS officers classified as conservation specialists, but a large number are engaged in advisory, research or other work with an important and very varied environmental content. There are seven full-time specialist advisers in socio-economics (which includes the diversification of farm businesses) and, again, many other ADAS officers devote part of their time to this work.

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of visits made by Agricultural Development and Advisory Service advisers to farms each year and the proportion of such visits which arise from *(a)* statutory functions, *(b)* advisory functions and *(c)* research and development; and what was the proportion of such visits which were initiated by the farmer concerned.

Mr. Jopling: I regret that the information is not available in the form requested. The following table sets out for the last two years the ADAS resources in man years consumed by statutory, advisory and research and development functions.

Man years

	Statutory	*Advisory*	*Research and Development*
1983-84	1,766	1,444	1,597
1984-85	1,716	1,479	1,648

Food (Diethylene Glycol)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further tests his Ministry intends to run to investigate the possible presence of quantities of diethylene glycol in sweets, pasties, sausage rolls, cakes and puddings; and what guidelines he intends to issue to packaging material manufacturers about replacing diethylene and monothylene glycols in regenerated cellulose film for wrapping food.

Mrs. Fenner: Manufacturers of regenerated cellulose film used for wrapping food have already taken steps to replace diethylene and monothylene glycol with alternative softeners. In addition, I expect that agreement will soon be reached on a proposal to amend the EC directive on regenerated cellulose film (directive 83/229/EEC) by introducing more stringent controls on the use of these glycols.

Once agreed, this amendment will provide statutory backing to the measures already adopted by the manufacturers. My Department is continuing to carry out regular tests on food wrapped in regenerated cellulose film.

Aujeszky's Disease

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has given further consideration to giving extra financial aid to the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd. to meet the costs of the Aujeszky's disease eradication scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham).

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the precise locations of all intervention stores in the United Kingdom on 15 November if he will give full details of the volume and nature of the stocks held at each location; what is the longest period of time for which cereals have been stored at each location; what is the estimated total cost to the United Kingdom of storing EEC food surpluses here in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement setting out the location of the various public and private stores financed by the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance Scheme

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) in how many instances in each of the past five years payments of hill livestock compensatory allowances have been withheld on conservation grounds;

2) if he plans to amend the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme to take account of the problems of overgrazing and of consequential damage to semi-natural vegetation.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Agriculture and Horticulture Grant Scheme

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in respect of how many farm improvement schemes containing moorland improvement proposals, a potential claim for grant remains under the agriculture and horticulture grant scheme.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that this information is not available because there was no requirement under the agriculture and horticulture grant scheme for the Ministry to approve proposals before work was done.

Environment (Sensitive Areas)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums of money he has provisionally allocated for the establishment of environmentaly sensitive areas within the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Strawberry Pulp

Mr. Freud asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has in respect of the proportion of strawberry pulp imported from the Netherlands *(a)* which is not produced in that country and *(b)* which is previously imported into the Netherlands from Poland.

Mrs. Fenner: I regret that no statistics are available. However, I would point out that the figures of United Kingdom imports by source which I gave to the hon. Member recently related to country of origin rather than to country of consignment. Country of origin is defined as that in which the final substantial processing took place.

Food (Quality)

Mr. Pike asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to take any steps to seek to improve the quality of food.

Mrs. Fenner: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd).

EC (Surplus Food Stocks)

Mr. Canavan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current amount and value of surplus food stored in the EEC; and what is the storage cost.

Mr. Gummer: A note setting out the volume of Community intervention stocks, including those of foodstuffs, on the latest available dates is deposited in the Library of the House and is updated monthly.

Stocks are valued only once a year. The value of Community stocks of beef, breadwheat, butter, skimmed milk powder and sugar on 30 November 1984 was £4·2 billion. Storage and handling costs of Community intervention stocks are not available.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 22 November 1985

ENERGY

Domestic Energy Prices

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the percentage increase in domestic gas and electricity prices, respectively, in each year since 1979; and, in each case, what has been the overall increase between 1979 and 1985 in cash and real terms.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The information requested is given in the table below:

Percentage increases in average domestic gas and electricity prices

	Gas per cent.	*Electricity per cent.*
1979 to 1980	17	27
1980 to 1981	26	20
1981 to 1982	25	10
1982 to 1983	12	4
1983 to 1984	4	1
1984 to third quarter 1985*	5	5
1979 to third quarter 1985*		
In current terms	124	85
In deflated terms†	36	12

Source:

Gas and electricity price components of the general index of retail prices as published by the Department of Employment.

* Comparable data for 1985 as a whole will not become available until after the end of the year. Data for the third quarter of 1985 are the latest available.

† Obtained by deflating the current gas and electricity price indices by the retail price index for all items excluding fuels.

Nuclear Power Stations (Inquiries)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Energy what has been the cost of each public inquiry into the construction of nuclear power stations since 1970.

Mr. Goodlad: Three such inquiries have been held since 1970. Information on the costs of the first two inquiries, for Portskewett and Connah's Quay, both held in 1971, is not readily available. The final cost of the third inquiry, for Sizewell B, will become evident only when the inspector has completed his report. However, costs up to 31 October 1985 either falling to my Department or recoverable to the CEGB total approximately £2,890,000.

Coal-firing Scheme

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the future of the coal-firing scheme.

Mr. Peter Walker: I attach great importance to keeping energy costs to industry to a minimum and have therefore decided to extend the deadline for receipt of applications for grants under the coal-firing scheme to the end of June 1987. The £75 million ceiling on total grants offered will no longer apply; I will make funds available as necessary to cover this extension. The exchange risk guarantee scheme on loans from the European Coal and Steel Community for coal-firing projects will be discontinued as from 31 December 1985 though of course companies will still be able to take advantage of the attractive terms of the loan facility itself.

Paul King and Lee James Bradley

Mr. Haynes asked the Secretary of State for Energy, what recommendations he has received from Her Majesty's coroner for Nottinghamshire arising out of the death of Paul King and Lee James Bradley.

Mr. Goodlad: I set out below the jury's recommendations as reported to me by the coroner:—

"We the jury recommend:—

(a) Closed sub-stations or improvements to stop children climbing in.

(b) Recommend a more frequent inspection of sub-stations.

(c) Look into some kind of system to detect a build up of pressure within the cover box to detect a breakage in the outer covering."

I have asked the Electricity Council to consider these recommendations as a matter of urgency and to advise. It is setting up a working party for that purpose.

TRANSPORT

M25 (Flora and Fauna)

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's policy towards the development of flora and fauna on the verges of the M25.

Mrs. Chalker: It is our policy to encourage a varied flora on all motorways, including the M25. In 1970 a survey showed that 384 species of flowering plant, including one third of all British grasses, were growing on the M1 where only five had been sown during construction. The survey is being repeated this year to assess the effects of the reduction of grass cutting on the enrichment of herbage by other species.

We take no specific steps to encourage fauna, but the development of a rich and varied flora and the absence of man's influence on motorway verges provide ideal conditions for a wide range of fauna to establish themselves.

Trinity House

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the work of the Corporation of Trinity House to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Ridley: The corporation, in consultation with the House authorities, have already made arrangements for such an exhibition: I shall have pleasure in opening it on Monday 2 December at 4.00 pm.

Road Accidents

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated proportion of all accidental deaths in the United Kingdom which result from accidents involving motor vehicles.

Mrs. Chalker: According to the definition of road accident death used by this Department, that is death

occurring within 30 days of the road accident, 38 per cent. of all accidental deaths were due to road traffic accidents in 1984.

However, if the definition employed by the Registrars General is used, that is death occurring within one year of the road accident, road deaths made up 40 per cent. of all accidental deaths in 1984.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Territorial Army

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prison officers presently members of the Territorial Army will be prevented from being members of the Territorial Army under revised guidelines;

(2) why certain prison officers are prevented from joining the Territorial Army.

Mr. Mellor: Prison officers are not permitted to join the Territorial Army because they are classified as a reserved occupation and would not be available for call-up in a national emergency. Figures for prison officers prevented from joining the TA are not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Schools (Police Visits)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the education authorities within the Metropolitan police area in which some or all schools ban visits from the police;

(2) if he will make a statement on the implications for the work of the Metropolitan police of the banning of police visits by certain schools in London;

(3) what information the Metropolitan police have as to the number of schools within their area at which police visits are banned.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am advised by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that there are 21 schools, all within the area of the Inner London education authority, which refuse to allow an educational input by the police. In addition to establishing good relationships with young people, the police seek to make children at the primary level aware of dangers—on the roads, canals, rivers and railway lines and of going off with strangers. At the next stage the dangers of drugs and solvent misuse and offensive weapons, as well as advice on self protection, feature in the valuable exchanges. The development of a better understanding of the role and function of the police is an important element of the commissioner's strategy for the improvements of relations between the forces and community in general. I fully share the commissioner's concern at the lack of co-operation of a few schools in promoting this objective.

Surveillance and Monitoring

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe the role of (i) the central intelligence unit and (ii) A8 department of the Metropolitan police in relation to surveillance and the monitoring of political and community developments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: After the urban riots in 1981 all police forces were invited to develop systems for monitoring rises in community tension which might foreshadow serious public disorder. In London each district reports on a regular basis on the level of tension in the area. The central information unit in A8 branch and New Scotland Yard collates these district reports for senior management to consider whether action is required to prevent tension escalating into riots.

Custodial Sentences (Women)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women were committed into custody by magistrates courts in default of payment of a fine where the original offence was one of loitering or soliciting during 1982, 1983, 1984 and the first six months of 1985.

Mr. David Mellor: The information available is given in the following table:

Prostitutes committed into custody by magistrates' courts in default of payment of a fine

	Number
1982	83
1983	168
1984	269
January—June 1985*	151

* Provisional.

Liverpool Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the week ended 2 November, or any other recent typical week, the workshops in Liverpool prison were open; what was the average number of prisoners employed; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of inmates in each class; how many individual prisoners attended at least one class during the week; and how much time on average each prisoner spent out of his cell during that week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November 1985 two of the eleven workshops at Liverpool were closed for structural alterations. The remaining nine workshops were open for an average of 13 hours employing an average of 41 prisoners. In addition 253 prisoners were employed on domestic, catering and maintenance duties.

Thirty-nine classes were held during this week, with total class hours of 72½ and the average number of inmates attending each class was 7·7. One hundred and eighty inmates attended at least one class. It is not possible other than at disproportionate cost, to calculate the average amount of time spent out of cells.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners who can be employed in workshops in Liverpool prison on any one day.

Mr. Mellor: Six hundred and seven.

Manchester Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the week ended 2 November, or any other recent typical week, the workshops in Manchester prison were open; what was the

average number of prisoners employed; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of inmates in each class; how many individual prisoners attended at least one class during the week; and how much time on average each prisoner spent out of his cell during that week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November 1985, the five workshops at Manchester prison were open for an average of 19 hours employing an average of 33 prisoners. In addition, 246 prisoners were employed on domestic, catering and maintenance duties.

Ninety-nine classes were held during this week, with total class hours of 188. The average number of inmates attending each class was 10·1. About 200 inmates attended at least one class. It is not possible, other than at disproportionate cost, to calculate the average amount of time spent out of cells.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum number of prisoners who can be employed in workshops in Manchester prison on any one day.

Mr. Mellor: Two hundred and nine.

Police (Wales)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the budget for each police force in Wales for the current financial year.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This is a matter for the police authority. The police budget for each force is determined locally by the police authority, subject to their statutory responsibilities and in consultation with the chief constable.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those police forces in Wales whose manpower is below establishment, and in which the police authority has stated that this is attributable to budgetary restrictions.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 31 October 1985 the authorised establishment and strength of the police forces in Wales was as follows:

	Authorised Establishment	*Police Strength*	*Vacancies*
Dyfed Powys	934	930	4
Gwent	978	971	7
North Wales	1,316	1,259	57
South Wales	3,109	3,053	56

The police budget for each force is determined by the police authority, subject to their statutory responsibilities, and in consultation with the chief constable. I understand that the North Wales police and the South Wales constabulary are holding police vacancies for budgetary reasons.

Dogs (Tail Docking)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his Department's policy towards the proposed Council of Europe convention banning the docking of dogs' tails; and what consultations he has undertaken on the issue with representatives of breeders and owners in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Mellor: The Government welcome the continuing work in the Council of Europe on issues of animal welfare in general and are maintaining a close interest in the preparation of a draft convention for the protection of pet animals. We are currently in correspondence with the Kennel Club and the Joint Advisory Committee on Pets in Society about various provisions in the draft convention, notably the article which would prohibit tail-docking and certain other surgical procedures unless a veterinary surgeon considers it to be in the interest of the welfare of the animal. We are also taking into account a number of representations about tail-docking received from owners and breeders.

Correspondence

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will answer the letter from the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight, concerning building contracts at Parkhurst prison and dated 21 October.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend replied to the hon. Member on 21 November.

Shops Bill

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those organisations from which he has recently received objections to the deregulation of Sunday trading.

Mr. Waddington: Since 1 October 1985 we have received objections to the deregulation of Sunday trading from the following organisations:

Hereford and district Butchers Association
Birmingham battalion of the Boys Brigade
Blackrod town council
Bebington council of Churches
Mid Cheshire Fellowship of Baptist Churches
Wolverhampton Deanery Synod
The Hallam branch (Sheffield) Christian Constituency Movement
Free Church of Scotland, Presbytery of Lewis
Christian Action Now
Orpington Deanery Synod
The Methodist Church Midsomer North Circuit
Plumstead Christian Fellowship
The Methodist Church Lillborough Circuit
The Oxford New Testament Fellowship
Orpington and District Evangelistic Council
Beverley and district Master Butchers Association
The Methodist Church Nottingham North Circuit
Swanborough Team of Parishes
Revelation Christian Fellowship, Chichester
Christian Family Ministries
West Wales English Baptist Association
Bangor and Ards district C E Union
The Methodist Church Exeter Circuit
United Reformed Churches in Darwen, Lancs
The Methodist Church Plymouth and Exeter district
The Lawyers Christian Fellowship
Plaistowe Christian Fellowship
Farmers Area Inter-Schools Christian Union
Union of Evangelical Churches, Essex
East Glamorgan Welsh Baptist Association
The Methodist Church London South East district
The Holy Christian Church, International Ministries, West Berlin
The Presbyterian Church of Wales—London Presbytery
Free Church of Scotland, Edinburgh
The British Hardware Federation
The Multiple Shoe Retailers Association
Caerphilly Fellowship of Christian Churches
Farmers Christian Postal Service
Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers

Jubilee Centre
British Council of Churches
Bishops Stortford Chamber of Trade and Commerce
Newport Chamber of Trade
West Wales English Baptist Association
Preston Action Committee
Worcester Diocesan Synod
Transport and General Workers Union
Byker and Heaton Shields Road Association.

Civil Defence

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what level of grant is currently being made to the Carmarthen district council in relation to the construction of an emergency control centre;

(2) if his Department will make extra resources available to Carmarthen district council to cover additional costs incurred during construction of the emergency control centre at Carmarthen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: An application for civil defence grant aid at the normal rate of 75 per cent. on capital costs of £60,000 for the construction of an emergency centre at Carmarthen has been approved. Payment of grant on additional cost resulting from security measures necessary to ensure that the work can continue is also eligible for grant aid, and consideration is being given to a further application for this purpose.

Prison Building

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the exact sums spent on prison buildings and accommodation in England and Wales for each of the last 10 years, giving figures for each year; and what is the proposed expenditure for 1986 and 1987.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1976-77	31·8
1977-78	33·4
1978-79	33·3
1979-80	36·6
1980-81	48·2
1981-82	51·4
1982-83	65·8
1983-84	88·4
1984-85	98·6
1985-86	107·0

These figures include expenditure on the design, construction, refurbishment, repair and maintenance of prison buildings and staff quarters. They exclude expenditure on the purchase of land and buildings and staff costs. The figure quoted for 1985-86 is the most recent available forecast of the total relevant expenditure in the current financial year. Details of proposed expenditure in 1986-87 and 1987-88 will be published in due course in the 1986 public expenditure white paper.

Leeds Prison

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about progress made in relieving overcrowding at Leeds prison.

Mr. Mellor: Overcrowding at Leeds will be relieved by HM prison Lindholme which has now received its first prisoners, and by the changes of role at HM prison Hull and HM remand centre Thorp Arch which will take place as soon as a small number of outstanding staffing issues have been resolved.

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about incidents involving violence against prison officers which occurred at Leeds prison on 19 November.

Mr. Mellor: At approximately 8.10 am, staff dealt with an incident between inmates. Shortly afterwards, other incidents occurred. A small number of inmates were involved in these disturbances and each incident was quickly dealt with by staff. Unfortunately, in the process, some injuries were sustained by members of staff, and six officers were sent for hospital treatment. One was initially detained but was allowed home later the same day. The police have been asked to investigate, in accordance with normal practice. Furthermore, at approximately 8.45 am, two inmates reported seeing flames in a warm air duct. As a precautionary measure, the wing was evacuated and the fire brigade attended, but no evidence of fire was found. The prison resumed normal working shortly before 9.15 am and has been operating normally since.

Criminal Proceedings (Time Limits)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of his field trials of time limits in criminal proceedings.

Mr. Hurd: Field trials are now beginning in the four areas served by the Crown court centres at Birmingham, Bristol, Maidstone and Southwark. Test limits will apply to cases from 25 November in magistrates' courts and from January in the Crown court. For this stage of the trials, the prosecution has been encouraged to act as if the time limits had statutory force, but the statutory procedures for seeking extensions and the consequences of breaching limits will not apply. The courts will have regard to the limits on the prosecution in arranging their business.

Where the accused is in custody the test limits are 56 days to summary trial, 70 days to committal for trial (or beginning of committal proceedings), and 112 days from committal to arraignment, except at Southwark where this limit will be 182 days. The overall test limits which apply whether the accused is in custody or on bail are 20 weeks to summary trial or committal, and at Birmingham and Bristol 26 weeks from committal to arraignment.

The longer custody limit at Southwark and the lack of overall limits there or at Maidstone reflect current circumstances in the Crown court in London and the south east, where too high a proportion of cases would inevitably overrun limits which were achievable elsewhere. The test limits are intended to be realistic initial targets for improvement on current performance.

We shall study the effects of the test limits over about six months. We have it in mind thereafter to make regulations to apply statutory limits in the trial areas only in order to conduct a more lifelike test before wider implementation.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Hearing-impaired People (Aid)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance Her Majesty's Government have given to deaf or hearing-impaired people in Third world countries.

Mr. Raison: In 1984-85 about £28,000 was spent from the aid programme on assistance to the deaf and hearing-impaired in developing countries. This included a programme for the development of education centres for deaf children in Pakistan, a number of projects jointly funded with voluntary organisations and some training. In addition some £20 million was spent on activities which contributed to the general health of the community, including the prevention of disability.

Tropical Development and Research Institute

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons he appointed a non-scientist to be director of the Tropical Development and Research Institute.

Mr. Raison: An open competition was held earlier this year to try to identify a suitable successor to the present director of the Tropical Development and Research institute. The vacancy was widely advertised in the appropriate journals, but the competition failed to produce anyone who was judged to have the right combination of scientific and administrative skills. Since the new director will face the major task of managing the relocation of the component parts of the institute on a new site at Chatham in 1987-88, proven management ability was a prime requirement. An assistant secretary (Mr. G.A. Beattie) in the Overseas Development Administration has accordingly been appointed, on temporary promotion, to the post for the next two to three years. The aim will be for this officer to be succeeded in due course by an officer with a scientific background.

Africa (Wheat Aid)

Sir Nicholas Bonsor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost of sending one tonne of wheat in overseas aid to Africa; and of that cost, how much is *(a)* storage, *(b)* purchase cost of wheat, *(c)* road transport in the United Kingdom, *(d)* shipping and *(e)* transportation within the African continent.

Mr. Raison: Tenders are invited for wheat purchased under the British food aid programme on a fob basis. The price paid therefore includes unidentifiable elements for storage and road transport to the shipping port. The average recent purchase price for wheat has been £110 per tonne fob.

Shipment is normally arranged on our behalf by the World Food Programme at an average cost of £42 per tonne to Africa. Internal transport costs vary considerably: on the most recent shipments to Ethiopia the estimated cost is £100 per tonne.

PRIME MINISTER

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister whether she was informed in advance by President Reagan of his willingness to hand over strategic defence initiative technology to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and why the United States is refusing to transfer the same technology to the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: President Reagan has referred on several occasions to the possibility of sharing with the Russians technology arising from the strategic defence initiative research programme. For its part, the United Kingdom has had intensive discussions with the United States about participation in the research programme. A statement will be made about this at the appropriate time.

State Opening of Parliament

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Prime Minister what was the cost to public funds of the State opening of Parliament on 6 November.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 18 November 1985, col. *1*]: The cost to the Property Services Agency of the State opening of Parliament on 6 November 1985 is estimated at £42,200. This includes the cost of providing stands for guests in the Royal Gallery, building camera positions for TV broadcasting and erecting the ornamental awning outside the Peers' Entrance.

No additional costs were incurred by the Metropolitan police as a result of the policing of the State opening.

Ministry of Defence costs are estimated at be about £17,000.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Pirate Radio Stations

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total cost to public funds during the last 12 months of the surveillance and other activities carried out against off-shore pirate radio stations.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Job Creation

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* his Department's estimates, for the years 1978 to 1984, for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions, of the numbers of jobs created by (i) regional policy and (ii) other employment assistance measures, and of the costs per job.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Gross Domestic Fixed Capital

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list, for each regional area of the United Kingdom, and by industry groups, the gross domestic fixed capital formation for 1979 and for the most recent year for which figures are available, at current prices and at 1979 prices.

Mr. Butcher: Constant price figures are not available. The latest published current price series for the years 1974 and 1980 to 1982 appeared at page 92 of the November 1984 issue of "Economic Trends". Comparable updated figures for 1979 are not readily available and would be costly to compile. More up-to-date information will be published in the November 1985 issue of "Economic Trends".

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list, for each regional area and by Government service, the gross domestic fixed capital formation for 1979 and for the most recent year for which figures are available *(a)* at 1979 prices and *(b)* at current prices.

Mr. Butcher: The information requested is not available at constant prices. Analyses by Government service are not readily available for 1979 and would be costly to compile. Available figures, expressed at current prices, were published for years 1974 and 1980 to 1982 at pages 92 and 93 of the November 1984 issue of "Economic Trends". More up-to-date information will be published in the November 1985 issue of "Economic Trends".

Manufacturing Industry (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list, for each regional area and for major industry groups, the capital expenditure in manufacturing for 1979 and for the most recent year for which figures are available *(a)* at 1979 prices and *(b)* at current prices.

Mr. Butcher: Constant price figures are not available. The latest available figures, at current prices and relating to capital expenditure in the standard regions of the United Kingdom, are given in the following table. Comparable information for the industry groups shown in this table is not readily available for 1979 and would be costly to compile.

Net capital expenditure in manufacturing industry at current prices*

£ million

Industry	*Year*	*Standard regions of England*								*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Northern Ireland*	*United Kingdom*
		North	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*East Midlands*	*East Anglia*	*South East*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*North West*				
(Class of Standard Industrial Classification Revised 1980)													
Extraction and preparation of	1980	†	−0·9	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	−0·4
metalliferous ores	1982	−0·1	−0·3	−0·2	—	—	†	—	†	†	†	†	1·2
Metal manufacturing	1980	31·4	64·0	18·8	1·1	25·3	9·6	53·9	16·8	88·0	36·8	0·4	346·1
	1982	39·7	46·2	7·2	0·8	16·5	4·2	28·2	11·9	60·2	11·2	0·2	226·3
Extraction of minerals not	1980	4·1	1·8	3·1	2·6	12·0	14·5	3·5	7·7	1·2	3·2	0·7	53·3
elsewhere specified	1982	2·1	1·4	3·2	3·2	12·1	*	5·4	*	*	*	*	52·1
Manufacture of non-metallic	1980	23·2	35·1	3·8	8·9	64·9	25·1	35·6	98·5	26·5	42·1	11·2	404·9
mineral products	1982	18·0	38·2	30·2	6·2	47·2	23·5	36·6	37·7	17·4	20·6	10·3	285·8
Chemical industry	1980	162·2	81·1	46·8	18·5	163·3	18·2	22·0	304·8	57·2	109·3	19·9	1,003·4
	1982	58·9	52·9	33·4	18·5	175·9	15·7	19·2	222·5	59·3	154·9	3·0	814·3
Production of man-made fibres	1980	†	5·0	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	†	11·2	41·5
	1982	†	3·3	†	—	†	†	†	†	†	†	3·8	16·5
Manufacture of metal goods not	1980	14·9	26·5	36·0	8·4	61·0	13·8	101·6	26·9	7·4	16·0	1·0	313·4
elsewhere specified	1982	8·6	16·8	27·3	7·5	41·2	6·7	58·8	22·3	7·3	11·6	0·7	208·7
Mechanical engineering	1980	51·6	75·8	61·7	23·2	135·8	48·0	74·5	65·2	17·0	70·2	7·6	630·6
	1982	55·7	50·4	48·6	42·0	114·2	39·3	47·3	75·0	17·5	52·4	16·1	558·6
Manufacture of office machinery	1980	†	0·2	0·6	0·3	26·3	0·8	3·1	†	†	20·6	†	56·0
and data processing equipment	1982	0·1	0·4	0·9	0·4	36·5	1·1	−1·3	0·4	0·1	21·2	0·1	59·9
Electrical and electronic	1980	32·2	17·6	21·3	10·9	182·1	23·8	54·6	53·0	26·9	46·8	6·2	475·4
engineering	1982	28·0	17·5	28·1	13·3	184·6	32·8	41·8	59·2	35·9	52·6	8·1	501·8
Manufacture of motor vehicles	1980	9·8	16·1	18·4	9·0	229·8	15·8	170·2	87·0	54·8	16·9	0·5	628·4
and parts thereof	1982	4·0	10·8	5·3	2·8	201·1	11·5	142·2	41·9	36·4	10·6	1·1	467·6

Industry		Year	Standard regions of England: North	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	East Anglia	South East	South West	West Midlands	North West	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	United Kingdom
Manufacture of other transport equipment	1980	6·9	19·8	24·8	2·1	95·0	55·3	9·2	37·7	4·3	25·1	2·5	282·5	
	1982	15·5	10·0	26·0	2·0	56·6	51·9	13·8	31·5	2·3	23·7	2·0	235·3	
Instrument engineering	1980	2·2	2·9	2·5	2·0	29·1	5·0	2·6	2·8	1·8	6·2	1·9	59·1	
	1982	−0·5	2·9	3·4	1·8	25·2	7·3	1·9	4·1	4·2	7·3	1·1	58·6	
Food, drink and tobacco manufacturing industries	1980	55·5	99·8	73·6	73·6	198·5	63·0	75·4	115·3	26·8	134·1	42·4	957·9	
	1982	40·5	89·3	106·5	80·5	202·7	92·3	97·4	117·2	41·0	99·2	48·5	1,015·1	
Textile industry	1980	−1·6	30·4	35·5	1·2	5·5	3·5	5·7	31·0	1·7	15·4	13·4	141·6	
	1982	1·7	31·0	35·8	0·5	4·9	1·6	4·5	20·6	7·9	13·4	6·4	128·3	
Manufacture of leather and leather goods	1980	0·2	1·5	1·9	—	1·8	0·3	0·5	1·4	0·2	0·9	0·3	9·0	
	1982	†	1·0	†	0·3	†	†	†	†	†	†	0·2	6·1	
Footwear and clothing industries	1980	6·0	9·9	10·4	1·4	16·9	2·0	4·0	14·2	4·5	9·2	4·5	83·2	
	1982	7·7	10·0	15·5	0·7	16·5	3·4	3·2	14·4	3·5	7·0	4·2	86·0	
Timber and wooden furniture industries	1980	9·5	20·0	9·6	4·4	44·1	11·3	9·2	19·3	7·5	23·7	4·2	162·7	
	1982	7·6	16·0	8·6	6·2	31·6	7·3	7·7	11·2	5·2	9·4	3·6	114·3	
Manufacture of paper and paper products: Printing and publishing	1980	63·4	36·6	31·1	16·7	197·9	30·3	28·6	62·7	25·7	56·7	6·1	555·7	
	1982	28·3	28·3	26·1	18·3	159·0	26·2	20·6	56·7	25·9	28·0	6·3	423·7	
Processing of rubber and plastics	1980	18·2	13·7	20·6	11·8	52·7	23·6	42·3	39·7	10·7	18·4	9·9	261·6	
	1982	14·4	14·5	20·9	9·8	46·2	16·4	31·0	23·8	7·7	13·1	6·4	204·1	
Other manufacturing industries	1980	1·0	0·4	2·1	2·5	18·8	1·6	7·0	3·4	2·2	2·2	—	41·2	
	1982	7·8	1·8	2·7	1·7	20·4	2·0	5·1	2·8	2·7	1·9	0·1	49·1	

Source: Annual Census of Production Business Monitor PA1002.

* Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classification Revised 1980.

† Figures cannot be shown owing to the risk of disclosing information about individual enterprises.

— Nil or less than half the final digit shown.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why he is unable to publish details of his Department's revised spending plans for 1986-87 and 1987-88 until January 1986.

Mr. Rifkind: Departments are still considering precise allocations. When completed, details of all departmental spending plans will be co-ordinated and published in the public expenditure White Paper in the usual way.

Guatemala

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for the future of consular relations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala of the recent elections in Guatemala.

Mr. Rifkind: The elections are not yet complete: there will be a second round between the two leading candidates on 8 December. We hope the election of a democratic Government in Guatemala will facilitate a resumption of consular relations for which we have always been ready.

Poland

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to publicise and protest against abuses of human rights in Poland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: During my right hon. and learned Friend's visit to Warsaw in April, he made clear the widespread concern in the United Kingdom about human rights in Poland. He also discussed the situation with members of the opposition and leaders of the church. We have since protested several times to the Polish authorities, in particular about the harsh sentences given to three leading members of Solidarity in June. I believe our views are well known in this country and in Poland.

Miami (British Consulate)

Mr. Sims asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to reopen the British consulate in Miami.

Mr. Renton: The British consulate in Miami will reopen in the first half of next year. This reflects both the growing economic importance of Florida and Miami's role in Caribbean trade.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing (Rushmoor)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many empty houses are held by the Property Services Agency in the borough of Rushmoor in its own right and under management for the Ministry of Defence.

Sir George Young: In the borough of Rushmoor, the Property Services Agency holds under its management 19 Ministry of Defence empty houses; 6 are in the process of transfer to private purchasers; 1 is with an estate agent for sale on the open market, and 12 form part of a larger group of houses offered for sale to the borough. There are none held by PSA in its own right but there are other Government-owned empty houses in the borough for which the Property Services Agency is not responsible.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the annual sales and numbers employed by the Crown Suppliers for each of the past five years.

Sir George Young: This information is included in the Crown Suppliers' annual report and accounts for 1984-85, a copy of which is placed in the House of Commons Library. The details are as follows:

	1980-81 £000	*1981-82 £000*	*1982-83 £000*	*1983-84 £000*	*1984-85 £000*
Sales	207,290	205,138	220,960	228,329	240,315
Staff numbers in post at 31 March	3,007	2,134	1,981	1,980	1,933

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the names of the review team considering the future of the Crown Suppliers and the sources of external expert advice.

Sir George Young: The members of the review team were:

Miss B. C. Turton, *Cabinet Office*
Mr. A. A. Carter, *Cabinet Office*
Mr. R. J. Meadows, *Her Majesty's Treasury*
Mr. N. L. Gregory, *The Crown Suppliers*
Mr. P. S. Mundy, *The Crown Suppliers*

During the course of the review, the team obtained external advice from 10 private sector firms which are suppliers to the Crown Suppliers, 10 public sector organisations which are customers, and three major private sector organisations which have large purchasing departments.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the review team considering the future of the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: The report was sent to my right hon. Friend on 11 November.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have been held with the staff of the Crown Suppliers as part of the review of the organisation's future; and what response they have made.

Sir George Young: During the review, the team consulted the Departmental Whitley council trade union side and the joint consultative committee trade union side. The former submitted a paper to the team.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* nationalised industries, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* other public sector bodies are currently customers of the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: The Crown Suppliers have provided goods and services during the last year to 14 nationalised industries, 83 local authorities and 550 other public sector customers, in addition to their main business with central Government Departments.

Fire Precautions Act 1971

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations have taken place on possible amendments to the Fire Precautions Act 1971; and what representations he has received on fire safety in houses in multiple occupation.

Sir George Young: Since my Department consulted local authority associations and other interested organisations in September 1983 about a possible extension of the Housing (Means of Escape from Fire in Houses in Multiple Occupation) Order 1981 (SI 1981 No 1576), my right hon. Friend has received a number of representaions about fire safety. These were mainly inquiries about when an announcement would be made on the review of the 1981 order and representations about the fire which took place in November 1984 at 46 Gloucester place, London, W1. The Fire Precautions Act 1971, and the possibility of any amendments to that Act, are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Supplementary Capital Expenditure

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the maximum supplementary capital expenditure allocation given to a non-metropolitan district council in 1985-86.

Mrs. Rumbold: The largest supplementary expenditure allocation given to a non-metropolitan district council for 1985-86 was £842,000. Supplementary allocations, issued to qualifying authorities, were calculated as an amount equal to 5 per cent. of an authority's basic capital allocation for 1985-86.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received an application from Portsmouth city council for supplementary capital expenditure for the year 1986-87; and whether he anticipates it will be eligible.

Mrs. Rumbold: The basic capital expenditure allocations to individual authorities for 1986-87 have not yet been decided. Nor have I received any application from Portsmouth city council for a supplementary capital expenditure allocation in respect of that year, although the council has been given a supplementary allocation for 1985-86.

Housing Capital

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, in ranking order, the 50 local authorities with the largest housing capital programmes in 1984-85 and 1985-86 showing the figures for each authority.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is shown in the following tables:—

Local Authority	*1984-85 Expenditure £ thousands*
(1) Greater London council	163,555
(2) Birmingham	94,253
(3) Manchester	70,700
(4) Liverpool	65,169

Local Authority	1984-85 Expenditure £ thousands
(5) Islington	49,165
(6) Hackney	46,381
(7) Lambeth	45,201
(8) Brent	42,941
(9) Newham	40,979
(10) Wandsworth	39,812
(11) Southwark	37,015
(12) Haringey	36,814
(13) Camden	35,949
(14) Sheffield	31,742
(15) Leicester	30,604
(16) Kensington and Chelsea	30,482
(17) Lewisham	30,230
(18) Leeds	29,903
(19) Nottingham	28,379
(20) Westminster	26,107
(21) Wolverhampton	25,939
(22) Hammersmith and Fulham	25,744
(23) Bolton	25,076
(24) Ealing	24,764
(25) Kingston upon Hull	24,309
(26) Newcastle upon Tyne	23,293
(27) Sandwell	22,390
(28) Bristol	22,317
(29) Bromley	21,972
(30) Greenwich	21,664
(31) Gateshead	21,258
(32) Bradford	21,138
(33) Salford	20,819
(34) Tameside	19,357
(35) Thamesdown	18,455
(36) Walsall	18,216
(37) Hillingdon	18,018
(38) Derby	17,762
(39) Rochdale	17,671
(40) Oxford	17,476
(41) Barnsley	17,230
(42) Hounslow	16,925
(43) Plymouth	16,838
(44) Waltham Forest	16,135
(45) Middlesborough	15,912
(46) Rotherham	15,806
(47) Oldham	15,786
(48) Croydon	15,631
(49) Knowsley	15,620
(50) Kirklees	15,566

Local Authority	1985-86 Estimated Expenditure £ thousand
(1) Greater London council	96,605
(2) Liverpool	89.852
(3) Birmingham	81,480
(4) Wandsworth	58,736
(5) Manchester	49,526
(6) Islington	46,216
(7) Hackney	45,066
(8) Lambeth	41,127
(9) Sheffield	36,797
(10) Leeds	35,098
(11) Camden	34,769
(12) Southwark	33,066
(13) Haringey	31,750
(14) Newham	29,851
(15) Greenwich	27,991
(16) Brent	27,262
(17) Ealing	25,605
(18) Kensington and Chelsea	25,605
(19) Nottingham	25,254
(20) Hillingdon	23,520
(21) Leicester	23,500
(22) Westminster	23,000
(23) Salford	22,677

Local Authority	1985-86 Estimated Expenditure £ thousand
(24) Lewisham	21,978
(25) Bradford	21,951
(26) Southampton	21,003
(27) Plymouth	20,078
(28) Bristol	19,909
(29) Coventry	19,760
(30) Newcastle upon Tyne	19,511
(31) Hammersmith and Fulham	19,496
(32) Bolton	18,501
(33) Gateshead	18,020
(34) Croydon	17,960
(35) Sandwell	17,842
(36) Kingston upon Hull	17,040
(37) Doncaster	16,432
(38) Walsall	16,182
(39) Wirral	15,801
(40) Wolverhampton	15,239
(41) Derby	15,107
(42) Waltham Forest	15,005
(43) Havering	14,495
(44) Enfield	14,350
(45) Tameside	14,201
(46) Wakefield	14,140
(47) Portsmouth	14,106
(48) Tower Hamlets	14,095
(49) Rotherham	13,745
(50) Sunderland	13,699

Paint (Lead Content)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will introduce legislation to establish maximum permitted levels of lead in paint *(a)* generally and *(b)* when used on equipment intended for outdoor playgrounds.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. In February 1985, the Paintmakers Association of Great Britain, whose member companies account for 90 per cent. of United Kingdom paint manufacturers, agreed to stop adding lead to white gloss, undercoat and primers for decorative use from January 1986; and to all other decorative paints and varnishes from July 1987. Paint with no added lead will be labelled appropriately. Further action can take place only in the framework of the European Community, and at the United Kingdom's instigation the Commission is now considering ways to encourage the manufacture and sale of unleaded paint.

Department of the Environment circular 22/82 (Welsh Office circular 31/82) advised local authorities to specify low-lead paint for almost all uses, including metalwork in recreation grounds. An information note, "Lead in Paintwork", published by the Department in 1982, gave advice on surveying and treating old paintwork. In consultation with the Department, the local authorities management services and computer committee (LAMSAC) issued further advice last year on the treatment of playground equipment.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the grants given by the Nature Conservancy Council towards the purchase of sites of special scientific interest land by voluntary conservationists in the current financial year; if he will express this

grant as a percentage of the total price paid where this is known; and if he will make a statement as to the role of such grants in the Nature Conservancy Council's work.

Mrs. Rumbold: Grants given by the Nature Conservancy Council to voluntary conservationists for the purchase of SSSI land since 1 April 1985 are as follows:

Body	*Site name*	*Grant paid*	*Per cent. of purchase price*
Northants Trust	High Wood and Meadow	10,000	25
RSPB	West Sedgemoor	16,000	25
Somerset Trust	Beer and Aller Wood	5,375	25
RSPB	Ouse Washes	1,188	25
Berks, Bucks and Oxon	Oulsmoor Bog	8,750	25
Hereford and Radnor	Upperhugg Meadow	1,640	25
Somerset Trust	Tealham and Tadham	5,250	25
North York Moors National Park Committee	Lewisham Woods	12,500	25
Woodland Trust	America Wood	5,000	25
Gloucester Trust	Coombe Hill Canal	4,750	25
Montgomery Trust	Roundton Hill	7,750	33⅓
Hereford and Radnor	Upper Lugg Meadow	595	25
RSPB	Allt Pu Farm	16,000	25
Norfolk Trust	Narborough Embankment	7,250	25
Northants Trust	Wansford Pasture	3,666	33⅓
Yorks Wildlife Trust	Sutton Ings	1,913	25
Somerset Trust	Tealham and Tadham	4,050	25
Notts Trust	Teversal Pastures	2,250	33⅓
RSPB	Ouse Washes	6,156	25
Leics and Rutland Trust	Orchid Meadows	11,893	33⅓
Scottish Wildlife Trust	Whitlaw Wood	500	25
Scottish Wildlife Trust	Woodhall Dean	8,500	50
Scottish Wildlife Trust	Coilsholm Wood	950	25
Kent Trust	Stonelees	8,000	50

Under arrangements operating since 1 April 1985 SSSI land attracts grant of 33⅓ per cent., and key sites of 50 per cent.

The list above includes details of those grants offered under previous arrangements and paid in the current financial year.

By assisting the voluntary conservation movement by way of grants, the Nature Conservancy Council will secure conservation protection of a substantial number of important nature conservation sites. They will continue with their programme of assistance as a viable alternative to NCC acquiring the land itself.

Co-operative Housing Developments

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will allocate funds to promote co-operative housing developments in areas where none exist.

Mr. John Patten: The allocation of funds to individual registered housing co-operatives or their projects is a matter for the Housing Corporation, or local authorities, within the resources available to them. However my Department's urban housing renewal unit is currently examining ways in which we could encourage the greater diversification of housing tenures, through housing co-operatives for example, in order to help to revitalise rundown council estates.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. Ashby asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue to the local authority associations consultation papers on housing subsidy for 1986-87.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Wales have issued consultation papers today. The first concerns the Government's proposals for calculating the increase in the amount of the local contribution which local authorities will be expected to find from local sources in arriving at their entitlement to housing subsidy for 1986-87. The second concerns the amount of management and maintenance expenditure to be treated as reckonable for housing subsidy purposes in 1986-87. Copies of the papers have been placed in the Vote Office and in the Libraries of both Houses.

Rent Act 1977

Sir Hugh Rossi asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any proposals to amend the Rent Act 1977, section 12(1) and schedule 2(2) so as to put right anomalies which have arisen regarding the status of resident landlords who hold their legal estate as joint tenants.

Sir George Young: This is an issue which we shall consider when a suitable legislative opportunity occurs.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what is the level of *(a)* male and *(b)* female unemployment in Derbyshire at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed male and female claimants in Derbyshire was 32,867 and 15,925 respectively.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what is the level of unemployment in Derbyshire for 16 to 18-year-olds and 19 to 21-year-olds at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the county of Derbyshire aged under 19 years and aged 19 to 24 years was 6,139 and 12,055 respectively. Separate figures are not available for those aged 19 to 21.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the net changes in employment by regional area from December 1982 after making allowance for second jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives the net changes in the civilian employed labour force between December 1982 and June 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, for the areas specified. The civilian employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment and the self-employed. Estimates of the self-employed after June 1984 are provisional.

The second jobs included in the employees in employment estimates are not separately identified, but estimates from the labour force surveys suggest an increase of 60,000 between spring 1983 and spring 1984 (the latest date for which estimates are available) in the number of people with a second job as an employee. The survey sample is not large enough to give reliable estimates on a regional basis.

The employment estimates do not include second jobs when they are held as self-employed.

Net changes in the civilian employed labour force between December 1982 and June 1985

	Number
South east	326,000
East Anglia	59,000
South west	83,000
West midlands	28,000
East midlands	12,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,000
North west	46,000
North	30,000
Scotland	38,000
Wales	35,000

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will list the net charrges in service sector employment by regional area from June 1979 to June 1985; and if he will also publish the figures for December 1982.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives the net changes in the numbers of employees in employment in the service industries between June 1979 and June 1985 for the areas specified. The table also gives the estimated numbers of employees in employment in the service industries at December 1982 for the same areas.

Employees in employment in the service industries

	Net changes between June 1979 and June 1985	*Employees in employment December 1982*
South east	199,000	4,995,000
Greater London (included in south east)	*	2,645,000
East Anglia	48,000	405,000
South west	32,000	961,000
West midlands	13,000	1,031,000
East midlands	16,000	736,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	−5,000	1,022,000
North west	35,000	1,453,000
North	−30,000	623,000
Scotland	50,000	1,210,000
Wales	10,000	553,000

* Not available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the net losses in full-time employment for men and women by each regional area and for Great Britain as a whole from June 1979 to June 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives the net changes in the numbers of male employees in employment and female full-time employees in employment between June 1979 and June 1985, for the areas specified. Estimates of full-time and part-time male employees are not separately available for these dates.

Net changes in employees in employment between June 1979 and June 1985

Thousands

	Males (including part-time)	*Full-time females*
South east	−291	−90
East Anglia	−20	+1
South west	−64	−74
West midlands	−225	−80
East midlands	−126	−37
Yorkshire and Humberside	−202	−80
North	−178	−53
North west	−266	−96
Scotland	−169	−73
Wales	−118	−28
Great Britain	−1,658	−610

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General what is the number of men, women and young people, respectively, who have been unemployed for more than a year, two years, three years and four years, respectively, in Knowsley, South.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the requested information in respect of unemployed claimants as at 10 October 1985.

Duration of unemployment

	Over one year	*Over two years*	*Over three years*	*Over four years*
Knowsley South parliamentary constituency				
Male	4,226	3,046	2,255	1,571
Female	1,158	640	402	248
Aged under 18 years	82	0	0	0

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General what is the number of job vacancies in Knowsley, South.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 4 October 1985 there were 118 unfilled vacancies in the area covered by the Huyton and Prescot jobcentres, which closely corresponds to the knowsley, South parliamentary constituency.

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General what is the number unemployed and the job vacancies in each occupation in Knowsley, South.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 10 October 1985, the number of unemployed claimants in the parliamentary constituency of Knowsley, South was 10,396.

The number of unfilled vacancies in the main occupational groups at 6 September 1985 is given in the following table for the Huyton and Prescot jobcentres, which closely corresponds to the Knowsley, South parliamentary constituency. More detailed occupational analyses of vacancies are available in the Library.

Unfilled vacancies at September 1985

Huyton and Prescot jobcentres	
Managerial and professional	20
Clerical and related	34
Other Non-manual occupations	26
Craft and similar occupations	19
General labourers	0
Other manual occupations	36
Total	135

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General how many jobs have been lost from 1979 to date in Knowsley, South.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about job losses is not available from the Department's statistics. Net changes in employment can be given but, for areas smaller than regions, only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken.

The latest available information is from the June 1978 and the following September 1981 census of employment. In that period the number of employees employed in the area covered by the jobcentre areas of Huyton, Garston, Prescot and Widnes, which corresponds most closely to the constituency of Knowsley, South, fell by 17,600. However, the boundary of the Garston jobcentre area changed between 1978 and 1981 decreasing the size of the area. Otherwise the fall in the level of employment would have been approximately 7,600 fewer.

Engineering Industry

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many persons were employed in the engineering industry in the east midlands in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and the nearest available date in 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table gives, for June of each of the years specified, the estimated number of employees in employment in the metal goods, engineering and vehicles industries (division 3 of the 1980 standard industrial classification) in the east midlands. Regional estimates of employees in employment for these dates are not separately available for the engineering industry.

	Number
1979	236,000
1980	230,000
1981	212,000
1982	203,000
1983	190,000
1984	187,000
1985	186,000

Regional estimates of employees in employment in the engineering industry are available from the September 1981 census of employment, at which time the figures for the east midlands were as follows:

	Number
Mechanical engineering (class 32*)	86,700
Electrical and electronic engineering (class 34*)	37,200
Instrument engineering (class 37*)	3,500

* 1980 standard industrial classification

Sunday Trading

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the employment implications for the small retail sector of the deregulation of Sunday trading.

Mr. Trippier: The Auld committee of inquiry asked the Institute of Fiscal Studies to examine the economic implications of deregulation for retailing as a whole. The report by IFS suggests that over a 15-year period up to 20,000 full-time equivalent jobs could be lost. There are, however, reasons to believe that this assessment may prove to be pessimistic. For example, it assumes no increase in sales. But many retailers expect an increase. If this happened, deregulation could lead to an increase in jobs; for example, the IFS also estimated that a 2 per cent. increase in sales would generate an additional 22,000 full-time equivalent jobs.

Construction Industry

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to require the construction industry training board to keep ethnic records of those in training.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Government do not require industrial training boards to keep records of the ethnic origin of trainees. Such matters are primarily for the boards themselves to decide.

In its role as a managing agent, the construction industry training board notifies the Manpower Services Commission of the ethnic origins of trainees recruited to its youth training scheme.

There is no formal requirement for employers or training bodies to undertake ethnic monitoring. However the Commission for Racial Equality's code of practice, which does not extend the law, recommends that employers monitor the effects of selection decisions and personnel practices and procedures in order to assess whether equal opportunity is being achieved. The code leaves it to individual employers to determine how this might be done.

Visual Display Units

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what studies have been made to assess the possible effects of visual display units on their operators.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Community Programme

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many jobs have been offered to unemployed citizens in Portsmouth and Hampshire, respectively, on the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: Forty-one thousand, nine hundred and five people have entered the community programme

in the south east region since it started in October 1982. Three thousand, six hundred and fifty of them were in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight area. A separate breakdown for Portsmouth and Hampshire is not available.

Self-employed Persons

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General how he calculates the regional figures for the net changes in the numbers of self-employed since December 1982.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of self-employment, both national and regional, are obtained from the Censuses of Population, the latest of which was held in 1981, updated to June 1983 and June 1984 by applying proportionate changes as estimated from labour force surveys. Estimates for periods between June 1981 and June 1984 are derived by interpolating between the estimates for June 1981, June 1983 and June 1984. Provisional estimates for dates since June 1984, which will be reviewed when the 1985 labour force survey data become available next year, incorporate the assumption that the average rate of change between 1981 and 1984 is continuing.

Estimated net changes in the numbers of self-employed since December 1982 are calculated by subtracting estimates for that date from those for the later date specified.

Job Creation

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the number of additional jobs created in *(a)* development areas and *(b)* intermediate areas for (i) all employees, (ii) part-time employees and (iii) the self-employed, from December 1982 to the most recent date for which figures are available; and how many of these additional jobs are second jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: I regret that the information requested is not available from the Department's statistics.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate for each regional area the number of second jobs created since December 1982.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates from labour force surveys suggest that the number of people in Great Britain with a second job, either self-employed or as an employee, increased by some 150,000 between spring 1983 and spring 1984. The sample size is not sufficiently large to provide estimates by region.

Mossmorran Fire (Report)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will agree to place the report now being compiled by the Health and Safety Executive on the fire at Mossmorran on 2 November in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A fire at the Essochem Olefins Inc plant at Mossmorran, Fife on 2 November 1985 was investigated by Her Majesty's Inspector of Factories on 3 November 1985. No one was injured and there was no risk to the public. A formal report is not being published. I shall write to the hon. Member about the matter and will place a copy of my letter in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Rural Initiative and Development Scheme

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the total value of assistance approved under the programme for rural initiatives and development scheme;

(2) how many applications for financial assistance have been received under the programme for rural initiatives and development scheme;

(3) how many applications for financial assistance have been accepted under the programme for rural initiatives and development scheme.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Of 46 applications received by the Scottish Development Agency, eight, involving offers of £292,850, have so far been approved.

Ambulancemen (Pay)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the criteria used to determine the timing of the 1986 pay rise for Scottish ambulancemen.

Mr. George Younger: Under an offer made by the management side of the ambulance Whitley council as part of the 1985 round of pay negotiations ambulancemen's pay in 1986 will be affected by a salary restructuring, to be implemented in March 1986 in England and Wales and September 1986 in Scotland. Because average earnings in Scotland are at present substantially lower than in England and Wales, the restructuring will give Scottish ambulancemen a significant increase in earnings, bringing them up to the national average. To allow time for the management of the Scottish ambulance service to accommodate the costs of this and to seek efficiency savings, the management side offered a later operative date in Scotland than in England and Wales.

Pay in 1986 for ambulancemen and women will be negotiated within the ambulance Whitley council in the normal way. The negotiations cannot begin until the consultations which the staff side is currently undertaking with its membership on the restructuring offer are completed and a settlement on the 1985 negotiations has been reached.

AIDS

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what cash is specifically earmarked to each of the haemophiliac reference centres to deal with acquired immune deficiency syndrome; how much cash is set aside for personal counselling; and if he will make a statement on the contribution of social work services to the reference centres.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total cash currently available in Scotland to deal with acquired immune deficiency syndrome; how this is allocated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The cost of treating patients suffering from acquired immune deficiency syndrome is met by health boards from their existing resources. In addition the following specific items are being funded centrally:

	£
(1) Purchase of screening kits by the Scottish national blood transfusion service	322,000
(2) Research projects on AIDS	125,000
(3) Confirmatory AIDS antibody testing at the virology reference laboratory, Ruchill hospital, Glasgow and the clinical virology laboratory, Edinburgh University	52,000
(4) Grant to Scottish AIDS monitor:	
Annual grant	6,000
Capital grant	1,000
(5) Courses for AIDS counsellors	1,500

Lithotripters

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if consideration is being given to the possibility of lithotripters being installed in hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I am considering the case for lithotripter treatment to be provided in Scotland. There are clinical and cost issues involved which preclude an immediate decision.

Diploma in Legal Practice

Mr. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students obtaining a place on the diploma in legal practice course at the five Scottish law colleges have been given a grant and how many have been refused.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Awards under the Scottish Education Department's postgraduate students' allowances scheme have been offered to 402 students selected by a co-ordinating committee comprising the university law faculties, the Law Society of Scotland, and the Faculty of Advocates, for assistance in respect of courses leading to the diploma in legal practice at Scottish universities. Applications from a further eight students selected by the committee are still awaited. Eight students selected by the committee have been refused award because they failed to meet conditions relating to residence or previous study. Applications are not accepted by the Department from students who fail to be selected by the co-ordinating committee, and information is not available on the numbers of students in that category.

Mr. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students in the five Scottish law colleges have been unable to obtain a place on the diploma in legal practice course.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The allocation of places on courses leading to the diploma in legal practice is a matter for the universities which provide such courses. My right hon. Friend has no responsibility for the universities and does not have the information requested.

Students (National Certificates)

Mr. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will discuss with the Scottish Certificate of Technical and Vocational Education council the possibility of all students who have completed the action plan modules receiving their national certificate at an early date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I understand that data received by the Scottish Vocational Education council until the end of October have now been processed and that outstanding certificates, for which fees have been paid, are in course of being issued. I hope that any delays experienced can be put down to teething troubles in the first year of operation of the new certificate.

Mr. Ewing: asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if, in the light of the number of students in Scotland who have completed the action plan modules who are now being asked by the Scottish Certificate of Technical and Vocational Education Council to pay sums of up to £40 before that body will issue their national certificate, he will take steps to meet the cost from central funds;

(2) how many students in Scotland who have completed the action plan modules have not received their national certificate because they claim they cannot afford to pay the module fee.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The intention to charge a fee per module was announced by SCOTEC and SCOTBEC (the predecessors of the Scottish Vocational Education council) in their letter of 10 June 1984 to education authorities and colleges. Responsibility for the funding of SCOTVEC rests, in the main, with regional and islands councils in Scotland and, following discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, agreement was reached upon a fee of £2 per module. Arrangements have been made by SCOTVEC with regional and islands councils and the Manpower Services Commission for payment of fees in respect of students under the age of 18 and those undertaking the national certificate as part of their youth training scheme programme in academic session 1984-85. SCOTVEC has written to students over the age of 18 requesting payment of outstanding fees before their certificates are issued. I see no case for meeting these fees from central funds. I have no information on the hon. Member's second question.

Student Grants

Mr. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he now intends to abandon his review of student grants.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced on 12 November at column *113* that he had concluded that no useful purpose would be served by the publication of a consultative document about student support. My right hon. Friend was fully involved in that decision, and does not propose to undertake separate consultations in Scotland.

Children at Risk

Mr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidelines the Scottish Home and Health Department issues to social work departments concerning the detection of non-accidental injuries and the defence of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. John MacKay: A joint circular on non-accidental injury to children was issued by Social Work Services Group and the Scottish Home and Health Department to social work departments and health boards in 1982. It consolidated earlier guidance, gave advice on the use of register systems, underlined the need for continuous review of procedural arrangements and professional

practice and emphasised the need for inter-professional and inter-agency co-operation in detecting and handling cases.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what training trainee social workers on certificate of qualification in social work courses in Scotland receive in the detection of non-accidental injuries and the protection of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. John MacKay: The Central Council for education and training in social work has statutory responsibility throughout the United Kingdom for the promotion of education and training in all aspects of social work, and for the approval of courses leading to the award of the council's certificate of qualification in social work. There is no nationally set syllabus for such courses.

I understand, however, that courses contain specific teaching on work with children and families, and the relevant legislation. Most students will also gain some experience in these areas on practical placement.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what in-service training courses are provided in Scotland for social workers to be trained in the detection of non-accidental injuries and the protection of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. John MacKay: Detailed information on in-service training courses for social workers in Scotland is not held centrally. I understand that such training is generally provided by social work authorities, or arranged by them according to their needs.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what training is given to residential social workers in Scotland in the identification of non-accidental injuries and the protection of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. John MacKay: The training of residential social workers in particular aspects of their work is a matter for their employers. Detailed information is not held centrally.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many children were placed on social work department at risk registers in Scotland in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown of the figures in terms of regional and island council areas.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not collected centrally. Each region maintains its own record of children who have been the victims of child abuse or who are thought to be at risk of such abuse.

Company Failures (Dundee)

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many companies have ceased operations in Dundee each year since May 1979; how many jobs have been lost; how many firms have notified intended redundancies; and how many jobs are involved.

Mr. Allan Stewart [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 November 1985, c. *256*]: There are no comprehensive statistics on redundancies and closures. The table below gives information on the number of redundancies and closures affecting 10 or more workers notified to the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur in the Dundee jobcentre area during the period May 1979 to September 1985. During the same period 380 advance notifications of redundancy were received, involving 22,165 redundancies.

Confirmed redundancies and closures in the Dundee jobcentre area from May 1979 to September 1985

	**Total number of redundant workers*	*Number of firms which have closed*
May-December 1979	523	3
1980	3,938	11
1981	2,956	14
1982	2,087	12
1983	4,347	15
1984	2,034	13
January-July 1985†	291	3
August-September 1985‡	70	0
Total	16,246	71

* Including those occurring as a result of closure.
† Final.
‡ Provisional.

British Geological Survey (Scotland)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans exist for the future development of the British Geological Survey (Scotland); and if he intends to increase the number of Scottish Office projects given to the organisation.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have been asked to reply.

The British Geological Survey in Scotland and England is a component institute of the Natural Environme nt Research Council (NERC) and the future development of the survey is a matter for that council. NERC has recently published a corporate plan which outlines a strategy for the earth sciences and is itself conducting a joint study with the advisory board for the research councils on United Kingdom needs for a geological survey.

The Department of the Environment prepares an annual geological research programme in consultation with SDD and other agencies. When a requirement for geological research arises in Scotland, BGS will be invited to bid for the work provided it possesses the appropriate skills and resources.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Civil Servants (Pensions)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made an assessment of the cost of adjusting the pension of those civil servants who retired during the years 1976 to 1979 to a level comparable with the pension of civil servants who retired after 1979; if the Government have any plans for making such an adjustment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The cost of uprating the pensions of civil servants who retired in the period 1976 to 1979, to a level comparable with the pension of civil servants who retired with the full benefits of the 1 April 1979 pay increase, would be about £8 million annually. But the incomes policy of those years applied generally, and it is not therefore a matter of adjusting the pensions only of civil servants. The cost of suitably uprating the pensions of all those in public service pension schemes who retired in the period has been assessed at £30 million annually.

These pensions are fully protected agaist price inflation. Moreover, the relationship between the value of

newly awarded pensions, calculated from earnings (pensionable pay), and that of pensions in payment, uprated in relation to prices, cannot remain constant. Taking account of the cost involved, and other demands on public expenditure, the Government have no plans to make an adjustment.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what is the estimated yield in the current financial year of stamp duty at 1 per cent. on *(a)* transfer of private dwellings and *(b)* transfer of securities.

Mr. Moore: Estimates are as follows:—
(a) transfer of residential property £360 million
(b) transfer of stocks and shares £500 million

Business Expansion Scheme

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the report by Peat Marwick Mitchell and Co. on the effectiveness of the business expansion scheme to be completed; and if he will publish its findings.

Mr. Moore: We have received the report. Its findings will be published in due course.

Income Tax

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in the 1986-87 financial year of introducing a reduced rate band of 25p of income tax on (i) the first £750 of taxable income, (ii) the first £1,000 of taxable income and (iii) the first £1,500 of taxable income; and in each case, what would be the impact on the net income of a married man on half average earnings, three-quarters average earnings, average earnings, twice average earnings, five times average earnings and 10 times average earnings.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Non-industrial Civil Servants

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing, for the years 1978 to 1984, the charge to the Civil Service Superannuation Vote arising from non-industrial civil servants taking early retirement or being made redundant; and if he will give bibliographical references to the published sources used.

Mr. Brooke: Detailed costs are not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly with the information that we have.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he can identify the per capita cost of (i) early retirement and (ii) redundancy in the non-industrial Civil Service, for the years 1978 to 1984; and how the Government calculate whether any proposal to substitute contracted labour for Civil Service manpower will be cost-effective after taking account of the transitional expenses.

Mr. Brooke: Detailed costs are not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly with the information that we have.

It is Government policy to transfer work out of Government Departments whenever this is commensurate with sound management and good value for money for the taxpayer. Departments have been advised that, when considering contracting out a service to the private sector, they should compare out-house and in-house costs taking into account all costs to the Exchequer. These include transitional superannuation and redundancy costs in addition to contractors' charges and administrative costs. They are also advised to consider the problems that might arise if they become tied to a monopoly supplier.

THE ARTS

Tyne Wear Theatre Company

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Minister for the Arts, what discussions he has had with the Tyne Wear Theatre Company concerning funding after the abolition of the Tyne and Wear county council.

Mr. Luce: It will be for the Arts Council, the regional arts association and successor authorities to decide on the specific allocation of funds after abolition. I refer the hon. Member to my statement of 14 November 1985 at columns 700-710, when I announced that the Arts Council would be receiving a grant of £25 million in 1986-87 towards the funding of arts bodies in the areas presently covered by the GLC and the metropolitan counties.

CIVIL SERVICE

Retirements and Redundancies

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Minister for the Civil Service (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the calendar years 1978 to 1984 the number of early retirements, distinguishing those which are due to ill-health, from the industrial Civil Service, identifying the cost to the Civil Service Superannuation Vote, and giving biblographical references to any published sources used;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for the calendar years 1978 to 1984 the number of industrial Civil Servants made redundant in (i) the Civil Service, (ii) the Ministry of Defence and (iii) the royal Dockyards, indicating the total and per capita cost to public funds and giving bibliographical references to any published sources used.

Mr. Luce: The information requested is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly with the information available.

SOCIAL SERVICES

One-Parent Families

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has concerning the numbers of children under the age of 16 years currently being raised in one-parent families; and how this figure compares with that in the previous 10 years for which figures are available;

(2) what information he has concerning the percentage of all children under 16 years of age who are currently being reared in one-parent families; and how this figure compares with those in the previous 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: Information from the general household survey indicates that in the period 1981 to 1983 about 12 per cent. of dependent children, most of whom are under

age 16, were living in one-parent families; the proportion a decade earlier was about 8 percent., the figure having risen fairly steadily over the intervening decade. These results, applied to population estimates, suggest that around the year 1982 approximately 1·4 million children under the age of 16 were living in one-parent families as compared to 1·1 million a decade earlier.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the numbers and percentages of single families where that parent is male.

Mr. Whitney: It is estimated that in the period 1981 to 1983 about 100,000 families, or just over 10 per cent of all one-parent families, were headed by a lone father.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific measures have been introduced by his Department to give support to one-parent families in which the father is the responsible parent.

Mr. Newton: One-parent benefit, and the particular help provided for one parent families through the supplementary benefit and family income supplement schemes are available to both lone fathers and lone mothers.

Lithotripters

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many lithotripters are currently in operation; where they are situated; and which health authority areas they cover.

Mr. Whitney: There are at present two lithotripters in England. One, at St. Thomas' hospital in London, is a joint venture with BUPA and 75 per cent. of the treatment is allocated to National Health Service patients. The service is being evaluated to determine the best use of the machine in treating renal calculi and to provide guidance on the number of such machines needed to deal with the potential national patient load. Patients are not restricted to those from particular health authorities.

The second unit is in the private sector, at the Devonshire hospital in London. I understand that some health authorities have made arrangements for National Health Service patients to be treated there but no details are held centrally.

Board and Lodging Allowance

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the maximum amount that can be paid to a homeless 16-year-old with no dependants, who is claiming board and lodging allowance in *(a)* London, *(b)* Manchester, *(c)* Norwich and *(d)* Cromer and who is receiving unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit, laundry allowance and any other allowances to which he is entitled after the proposed changes as outlined in his Department's publication "Supplementary Benefit Board and Lodging Areas, Second Edition."

Mr. Newton: The supplementary benefit requirements of a single adult boarder are the amount of his boarding charge, subject to a limit, plus a personal expenses allowance of £9·25 (or £10·30 at the long-term rate). The limits prescribed in the publication "Supplementary Benefit Maximum Amounts, Initial Periods and Board and Lodging Areas" for *(a)* London, *(b)* Manchester, *(c)* Norwich and *(d)* Cromer are *(a)* £70, *(b)* £55, *(c)* £60 and *(d)* £60. In addition, according to his circumstances, a boarder can qualify for additional requirements as prescribed in schedule 4 to the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983 (SI 1983 No. 1399) but only to the extent that the items are not included in his boarding charge. In the case of laundry the amount would be the actual expenditure incurred less 50 pence.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why, in view of the fact that of the 1,170 claims examined in the Euston board and lodging area, 55 per cent. of claimants were found not to be resident at the hotel stated in their claim forms, only 10 claimants were prosecuted.

Mr. Newton: The cases were examined to establish how many claimants in the Euston area had moved during the currency of their claims without giving notice of change of address. In all cases where claimants were found to have moved, benefit payments were stopped immediately. Continued inquiries are being made into the whereabouts and benefit entitlement of the missing claimants, and so far 13 prosecutions have been brought. My right hon. Friend has indicated that the Department will, in the light of evidence in this and other cases, step up its action to deal with this kind of abuse of the system.

Benefit Claims (Cosham)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the current weekly rate of applications for each of the principal benefits at his Department's office at Roebuck house, Cosham, Portsmouth; and how this compares with the position one and two years ago.

Mr. Major: The table shows the average weekly rate of claims made for principal benefits during October 1985, 1984 and 1983 at the Department's office in Portsmouth.

Benefit	*Average weekly claims*		
	October 1983	*October 1984*	*October 1985*
Sickness-invalidity benefit	61	58	48
Maternity allowance	50	44	33
Retirement pension	387	280	372
Widows benefit	4	6	4
Death grant	46	48	40
Industrial disablement benefit	nil	nil	nil
Supplementary benefit	444	438	500

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of current payments of each of the principal benefits being made at his Department's office at Roebuck house, Cosham, Portsmouth; and how this compares with the position one and two years ago.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of payments made to claimants by the Department's office at Portsmouth during the four week period ending 22 October 1985 — the latest available figures — and for the same period one and two years ago.

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Girocheques			
Supplementary benefit	3,033	3,677	3,823

	1983	1984	1985
Short-term benefit	4,701	5,831	7,942
Long-term benefit		6,590	2,581
Order books			
Supplementary benefit			
Combined retirement and supplementary pension	1,620	1,331	1,210
Supplementary allowance	1,340	1,550	1,434
Short-term benefit	546	729	555
Long-term benefit			

Notes:

1. The above figures do not include payments of supplementary benefit made through unemployment benefit offices.
2. Short-term benefit includes sickness and invalidity benefit, maternity allowance and severe disablement benefit. Long-term benefit includes retirement pension, widows pension, industrial disablement benefit and death grants.
3. Separate figures for short and long-term benefit girocheques were not kept before 1984 and separate figures for order book issues are not available.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is currently the average time taken by his Department's office at Roebuck house, Cosham, Portsmouth, to process new claims for single payments; and how this compares with the position one and two years ago.

Mr. Major: Claims for single payments are determined as soon as possible after all the information required has been collected. A limited sample of recent cases at Portsmouth local office suggests that, on average, claims for single payments are currently being determined 10 days after their receipt, similar figures for 1984 and 1983 are not available.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is currently the average time taken to deal with new benefit claims from *(a)* householders and *(b)* non-householders at his Department's office at Roebuck house, Cosham, Portsmouth; and how this compares with the position one and two years ago.

Mr. Major: Information is not available in the form requested. The latest figures show that the average time taken to deal with all new supplementary benefit claims at the Department's office in Portsmouth is 7 days, compared with 6 days at the same time last year and 5 days the year before.

Children at Risk

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children were placed on social work department at risk registers in each of the past five years; and if he will provide a breakdown of the figures by local authorities.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) on 12 November at column *158*.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines he issues concerning the detection of non-accidental injuries and the protection of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has issued a number of guidance circulars on child abuse to local authorities, health authorities and other agencies concerned with children and their families. This guidance, which is aimed at promoting a co-ordinated professional approach to the problem, is currently being thoroughly revised and we intend to issue a consultative paper early next year.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what training is included in his Department's certificate of qualification in social work courses regarding the detection of non-accidental injuries and the safeguarding of children at risk of such injuries;

(2) what training residential social workers receive in the identification of non-accidental injuries and the protection of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what training student doctors undertake during their medical studies in the detection and treatment of non-accidental injuries and the treatment of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. Hayhoe: Under the Medical Act 1983, responsibility for the medical undergraduate curriculum is with universities within the framework laid down by the General Medical Council. I understand that the current GMC recommendations on medical education stress the importance of wide clinical experience for medical students including child health and paediatrics.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what in-service training courses are provided for general practitioners regarding the detection of non-accidental injuries and the treatment of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. Hayhoe: There is a wide range of courses under section 63 of the Health Service and Public Health Act 1968 dealing specifically with child abuse and the wider aspects of family care. Also multidisciplinary courses are provided by public and voluntary agencies which general practitioners can attend.

Benefit Expenditure (Uprating)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated effect on total benefit expenditure, excluding administration costs, between July 1986 and April 1987, of uprating benefits in July 1986 instead of November 1986.

Mr. Newton: On the assumption in the Chancellor's autumn statement that the movement in prices over the eight months to January 1986 would be of the order of 1 per cent., the July 1986 uprating will add some £270 million to benefit expenditure by the end of the financial year 1986-87. An estimate of expenditure had the uprating taken place in November instead will not be available until the retail prices index for May 1986 is published.

Schoolchildren (Dietary Survey)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the costs of the dieting survey of schoolchildren referred to in his reply of 17 December 1984 to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) *Official Report*, columns *49-50*, as expected to be available in spring 1985.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list such information as is available to him as to which institutions in the National Health Service offers courses leading to an honours degree in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy;

(2) if he will list such information as is available to him, by National Health Service institution, as to the numbers of staff engaged in full or part-time teaching on courses leading to an honours degree in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy; and if he will give any information he has as to whether their contracts are with the National Health Service or with some other employer;

(3) if he will list such information as is available to him, by institution within the National Health Service, as to the number of students currently sitting examinations for an honours degree in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Liver Transplants

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what change there has been in the resources devoted to liver transplant work in the National Health Service over the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 November 1985, c. *164*]: I regret that there was a typing error in my reply. The funds allocated under the supra regional arrangements for 1985-86 should enable about 75 operations to be performed.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Pupil Expenditure

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the change in expenditure per pupil in real terms between 1979-80 and 1984-85 for primary school and for secondary schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: It is estimated that the net institutional expenditure per pupil of local education authorities in England increased by 16 per cent. in real terms between 1979-80 and 1984-85, in both primary and secondary schools. The gross domestic product (market prices) deflator was used to bring expenditure to a common price base for this calculation. The figures for 1984-85 are drawn from the estimates published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

Colleges of Higher Education

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what grounds Her Majesty's Government decided on the sum of £657 million for colleges of higher education during the next academic year.

Mr. Walden: Following consultation with the local authority associations, my right hon. Friend determined the quantum of advanced further education expenditure within the pre-determined pool in England in 1986-87 at £661 million. This sum relates to all the advanced further education provided by local education authorities, not only to colleges of higher education.

My right hon. Friend set out the grounds for his decision in his reply of 12 November to the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) at column *107*.

Nursery Education

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children under five years entering school in the current year have had at least one year's nursery education as a percentage of all children entering primary school.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Teacher's Dispute

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what figures his Department collects on the consequences of the teachers' dispute;

(2) if he will seek information from local education authorities on the number of *(a)* teachers and *(b)* pupils involved in industrial action and the number of pupils affected.

Sir Keith Joseph: There are 104 LEAs in England and Wales, over 26,000 maintained schools, some 440,000 qualified teachers and approaching 8 million pupils. The Department has attempted to collect information on a regular basis concerning the nature, extent and effects of industrial action by teachers. In view of the size of the school system, variations in both the scale and effects of industrial action, the wide range of action taken from strikes to refusal to undertake certain activities inside and outside timetabled schools hours, the increasing incidence of short-notice strikes by individual teachers for periods of half an hour or less, and the manpower implications for both the Department and LEAs, it is not feasible to assemble comprehensive data.

Further Education

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will publish a list showing the percentages of pupils in each education authority in England and Wales who *(a)* stay on to sixth form and *(b)* continue full-time further education, in the last year for which statistics are available.

Mr. Dunn: The percentages of young people aged 16 who remained in full-time education in maintained secondary schools or in further education establishments in English local education authorities in 1984-85 are given below. Statistics for schools and further education establishments in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Percentages

	(a) Maintained secondary schools	*(b) Further education establishments*
Barking	18	13
Barnet	57	13
Bexley	33	15

	(a) Maintained secondary schools	(b) Further education establishments
Brent	46	12
Bromley	39	14
Croydon	30	18
Ealing	38	16
Enfield	36	14
Haringey	35	19
Harrow	55	17
Havering	27	16
Hillingdon	33	13
Hounslow	45	13
Kingston-upon-Thames	43	15
Merton	40	16
Newham	28	17
Redbridge	38	15
Richmond-upon-Thames	1	55
Sutton	35	21
Waltham Forest	35	13
Inner London	33	16
Birmingham	25	18
Coventry	28	15
Dudley	14	29
Sandwell	18	17
Solihull	21	23
Walsall	24	13
Wolverhampton	23	18
Knowsley	16	18
Liverpool	27	15
St. Helens	23	18
Sefton	28	26
Wirral	30	16
Bolton	22	18
Bury	30	20
Manchester	29	13
Oldham	17	13
Rochdale	24	12
Salford	21	15
Stockport	29	17
Tameside	19	18
Trafford	19	25
Wigan	20	24
Barnsley	16	19
Doncaster	25	11
Rotherham	21	16
Sheffield	22	19
Bradford	30	10
Calderdale	26	14
Kirklees	26	19
Leeds	28	16
Wakefield	15	25
Gateshead	19	20
Newcastle upon Tyne	27	14
North Tyneside	29	18
South Tyneside	19	14
Sunderland	20	12
Isles of Scilly	—	41
Avon	28	17
Bedfordshire	31	14
Berkshire	32	21
Buckinghamshire	34	20
Cambridgeshire	26	22
Cheshire	28	20
Cleveland	25	19
Cornwall	29	23
Cumbria	24	18
Derbyshire	19	23
Devon	20	27
Dorset	26	18
Durham	20	16
East Sussex	34	19
Essex	27	17
Gloucestershire	28	16
Hampshire	24	26
Hereford and Worcester	24	22
Hertfordshire	35	20
Humberside	25	15
Isle of Wight	28	21
Kent	30	20
Lancashire	14	26
Leicestershire	33	14
Lincolnshire	21	24
Norfolk	22	20
North Yorkshire	30	21
Northamptonshire	25	17
Northumberland	30	17
Nottinghamshire	21	15
Oxfordshire	31	21
Shropshire	26	20
Somerset	18	33
Staffordshire	21	20
Suffolk	27	13
Surrey	45	17
Warwickshire	23	27
West Sussex	37	17
Wiltshire	17	31

Maintained Schools (Parental Contributions)

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on parents' financial contributions to maintained schools.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities may by law accept gifts from parents and others towards the discharge of their statutory functions, and their is a long and honourable tradition under which such gifts are made and applied for good educational purposes. The Government welcome the generosity which very many parents have shown and continue to show in helping their children's schools. It is however important to see the scale of the resources involved in perspective. The National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations, in its recent report on the state of schools in England and Wales, estimated that total parental funding throughout England and Wales in 1983-84 probably approached £40 million. This sum, although large, is only about half of one per cent. of the total cost of school education. The burden of financing the schools falls almost entirely on the taxpayer and the ratepayer, and will continue to do so.

Local education authorities are under a statutory duty to ensure that their schools are sufficiently equipped to provide suitable education for all their pupils; each LEA therefore needs to satisfy itself about the level of equipment and materials available to its schools. Moreover, section 61 of the Education Act 1944 prohibits the charging of fees for the education provided in maintained schools. Any parental contributions to the costs of that education must therefore be voluntary. This should be made clear to parents; and if voluntary contributions are invited it should also be made clear that no child will suffer any detriment because his or her parents are unable or unwilling to make those contributions.

The Government have made clear their view that, in the light of the statutory provisions, local education

authorities are not entitled to anticipate any particular level of parental contributions when setting the level of capitation allowances for individual schools, since those contributions are voluntary and cannot, therefore, be relied upon. LEAs are however entitled to consider the provision already made in individual schools, and to give additional support to those schools which are less fortunately placed than others, whether that situation arises because of different levels of parental support in the past or for some other reason.

Within the limit of the resources available to them, LEAs' objective should be to ensure that the fullest possible range of educational opportunities is available to children in every school. Authorities therefore need to be alert to any discrepancy in opportunities which is arising and to seek to help schools where necessary. This does not mean that capitation should be reduced below the general level for the well-provided schools; it may mean that some schools might look to the LEA for additional support.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Toxic Materials

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations cover the dumping at sea of toxic material, including asbestos.

Mr. Gummer: The deposit of any substance or article in the sea from ships aircraft, hovercraft, or marine structures is governed by the Dumping at Sea Act 1974. The legislation provides that, subject to certain exemptions, such deposit may take place only under the terms of a licence granted by the appropriate Government Department.

Intervention Wheat

Sir Nicholas Bonsor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average storage cost of one tonne of intervention wheat from purchase to disposal; and what is the average time that one tonne of wheat is stored in intervention.

Mr. Gummer: Currently the average length of time for which intervention wheat has been held in store is 10 months; the average cost of storage is 2·8 pence per tonne per day.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the precise locations of all intervention stores in the United Kingdom on 15 November; if he will give full details of the volume and nature of the stocks held at each location; what is the longest period of time for which cereals have been stored at each location; what is the estimated total cost to the United Kingdom of storing EEC food surpluses here in 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement setting out the location of the various public and private stores financed by the intervention board for agricultural produce.

Mr. Gummer: [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c.*301*]: The locations and quantities of intervention stocks as at 30 September, the latest date for which figures are available, are listed below. The longest period for which cereals have been held at each store would be disproportionately costly to calculate, but it is estimated that the average period for which current cereals stocks have been held is 10 months. The latest estimate of storage and related costs in respect of intervention stocks (including feed grains) is £102 million as given in the 1985-86 winter supplementary estimate for class III, vote 1.

Intervention Beef stocks

Town	*Tonnes*
Aberdeen (3)	3,497
Antrim	4,880
Avonmouth (2)	715
Aylesford	40
Ballymena	1,149
Belfast (3)	2,790
Bellshill	371
Bishop Stortford	13
Bourne	263
Bridge of Allan	122
Bury St. Edmunds	554
Cambridge	177
Cannock	752
Cardiff	647
Colnbrook	1,723
Craigavon	3,300
Cullompton	253
Doncaster	125
Droitwich	789
Dundee	641
Dungannon	3,307
Eastleigh	244
Edinburgh (2)	312
Exeter	718
Felixstowe	142
Fleetwood	99
Fraserburgh	639
Gateshead	570
Gillingham	387
Glasgow (2)	1,142
Grantham (2)	403
Granton	64
Hull (4)	7,362
Inverness	492
Kings Lynn (2)	4,113
Leeds (3)	2,949
Lisburn	2,204
Liverpool(4)	2,072
London (4)	2,848
Lowestoft	216
Luton	89
Manchester	1,228
Newry	201
Newtownabbey	5,204
Northallerton	147
Nottingham	118
Nuneaton	45
Omagh	190
Oswestry	283
Paddock Wood	1,515
Peterborough (2)	4,058
Peterhead	362
Plymouth	98
Pontefract	1,643
Portadown	40
Reading	42
Rhyl	207
Sherborne	236
Shrewsbury	838
St. Helens	206
Strabane	338
Trafford Park	528
Truro	71

Town	Tonnes
Walsall	706
Warrington	413
Warwick	17
Wigston	114
Wolverhampton	581

Intervention Butter Stocks

Town	Tonnes
Aberdeen	733
Annalong	680
Augher	1,001
Ballymena	433
Banbridge	4,028
Belfast (4)	2,849
Bristol (5)	16,515
Camborne	1,447
Cannock	2,150
Cardiff (3)	11,327
Chard	490
Chester	1,059
Coleraine	2,370
Colnbrook	4,938
Craigavon	331
Cullompton	13,522
Dagenham	1,646
Doncaster	2,804
Dover	144
Droitwich	626
Dundee	458
Eastleigh	761
Easton	997
Edinburgh (3)	2,485
Exeter	2,761
Fleetwood	2,370
Frome	1,507
Goole	325
Gateshead	1,024
Grimsby (4)	6,723
Glasgow (3)	6,226
Harlow	64
Heywood	1,155
Hull (3)	2,827
Inverness	92
King's Lynn (2)	2,429
Leeds (..)	2,024
Leek	1,296
Lisburn	1,575
Liverpool (5)	15,606
London (5)	4,467
Londonderry	1,007
Manchester (2)	6,265
Milford Haven	480
Milton Keynes	320
Newport	1,040
Newtownabbey	1,097
North Allerton (2)	2,284
North Shields	3
Nuneaton	1,414
Oswestry	2,972
Peterborough (2)	1,883
Plymouth	1,149
Portadown	3,533
Preston	1,675
Reading	522
Retford	1,582
Rhyl	1,397
Rochdale	5,992
St. Albans	1,040
St. Helens	1,144
Sheffield (2)	1,958
Sherborne (2)	4,367
Shrewsbury	359
Southall	1,625
South Kirby	167
Stoke-on-Trent	409
Stonehouse	304
Stourport	1,861
Strabane	2,967
Swansea	322
Swindon	1,080
Taunton	540
Thetford	1,672
Tewkesbury	1,353
Truro	342
Walsall	1,963
Warrington	2,979
Warwick	1,485
Whitland	280
Wigan	800
Wigston	1,208
Wolverhampton	6,942
Yate	361
Yeovil	168

Intervention SMP Stocks

Town	Tonnes
Antrim	400
Avonmouth	200
Ballymena (2)	525
Banbridge	5,525
Bedwas	2,262
Billingham (2)	464
Bootle	120
Bristol	1,760
Coleraine	827
Calne	20
Craigavon	135
Cumbernauld	456
Cockermouth	1,055
Darlington	1,000
Droitwich	543
Exeter (2)	2,362
Glenrothes	966
High Ercall	1,714
Hillsborough	370
Katesbridge	420
Kingswinford	20
Kirkby	80
Knockin Heath	349
Llandysul (2)	979
Lostwithiel	280
Moneymore	740
Newtownabbey	45
Newton Abbott (2)	731
Northallerton	375
Nuneaton	48
Penrith	920
Portadown	1,500
Redcar	136
Rotherwas	362
St. Clears	960
St. Helens	520
Stockton-on-Tees	1,673
Taunton	240
Turrington (2)	880
Warrington	206
Wellington	1,520
Westbury	201
Whitchurch (Hants)	201

Feedwheat Intervention Stocks

Town	Tonnes
Duns	2,075
Glenrothes	18,629
Kirkcaldy	17,417
Locharbriggs	20,496

Town	Tonnes
Ormiston	21,569
Stowmarket (3)	12,216
Huntingdon	13,231
Norwich	4,297
Braintree (2)	15,354
Bressingham	38,010
Bury St. Edmunds (2)	38,020
Maldon	1,351
Ely (2)	25,948
Sudbury (3)	25,401
Dagenham	22,802
Clopton	24,445
Diss	11,948
Downham MKT	11,426
Swaffham	5,036
Elsworth	23,998
Felixstowe (3)	159,063
Finmere	37,052
Foulsham (3)	15,143
Fulbourn	9,969
Kings Lynn (2)	64,993
Hadstock (2)	12,191
Halesworth (2)	58,656
Hayes	44,451
Heybridge	41,679
Newmarket (3)	13,932
Linton	7,941
Lympne	19,662
Maldon	43,125
Methwold	9,486
London	21,499
Mistley	12,128
Ipswich	3,984
Aylesbury	12,024
Royston (2)	22,083
Wimblington (3)	77,389
Raydon	3,035
St. Ives	17,877
Sawston	14,776
Snetterton	44,922
Soham	11,102
Stoke Ferry	15,057
Stretham	9,935
Tangmere	9,072
Roydon	9,990
Bicester	14,154
Walsingham	6,811
Wellingburgh	8,650
Westbury	12,002
West Wratting	11,013
Whittlesford	2,295
Wisbech	32,691
Witham	37,680
Halstead	17,235
Birmingham	3,185
Ancaster	19,965
Birkenhead	497
Boston	12,758
Normanton	28,508
Lincoln (3)	104,645
Gainsborough (2)	15,097
Grantham (2)	60,062
Hartlebury	73,221
Heighington (2)	13,132
Hemswell	55,884
Horncastle	22,555
Ingham	12,182
Lutterworth	88,564
Manby	40,173
Market Harborough	10,942
Minworth (2)	118,073
Missen	9,140
Sleaford	8,866
Press Heath	37,873
Skegness	19,364
South Wigston	14,351
Swinderby	16,059
Tuxford	17,000
Uttoxeter	52,193
West Hallam	43,061
York (2)	67,298
Driffield (2)	58,650
Doncaster (3)	70,395
Gateshead	18,533
Barrow-on-Humber	8,101
Hatfield	15,594
Hull (3)	36,868
Immingham	9,489
Kirton Lindsey	4,902
Melmerby	15,896
Newcastle	10,366
Boroughbridge	3,953
Pocklington	12,311
Scunthorpe	76,066
Tadcaster	3,555
Tholthorpe	946
Thorne	4,164
Salisbury (3)	94,940
Abingdon (2)	49,449
Avonmouth (2)	50,172
Banbury	35,318
Christchurch	37,902
Gloucester	46,630
Grateley	14,794
Haresfield	23,636
Hurn	59,900
Membury	12,372
Severn	6,338
Swindon	54,317
Wroughton	35,167

Barley intervention stocks

Town	Tonnes
Colsterworth	5,742
Coventry	47,088
Basildon	34,408
Bressingham	10,041
Banbury	15,538
Brentwood	4,048
Chipping Warden	28,406
Corby	6,404
Ely (2)	37,189
Eye	7,293
Towcester	5,190
Norwich (2)	24,221
Kings Lynn (3)	27,337
Newmarket	1,158
Woodbridge	15,674
Pickenham	7,426
Purfleet	2,315
Rackheath	8,576
Roydon	10,342
Saling	8,469
Thetford	12,095
Snetterton	25,236
Bury St. Edmunds	17,584
Staughton	26,077
St. Ives	10,635
Tangmere	16,988
Thetford	10,834
Walsingham	9,218
Whittlesey	9,168
Wingham	3,706

Breadmaking wheat intervention stocks

Town	Tonnes
Coventry	702
Ford	22
Hadleigh	1,492

Town	Tonnes
Kings Lynn (New Forge)	1,594
Pebmarsh	85
Skegness	562
Stretham	1,462
Swindon	12,893
Wells	359
Wisbech	215

Rye intervention stocks

Town	Tonnes
Manby	111

Barley intervention stocks

Town	Tonnes
Kirknewton	8,849
Duns(2)	74,305
Airdrie	21,625
Arbroath	15,571
Drumlithie	13,255
Dysart	35,409
Evanton(2)	21,261
Fearn	7,934
Granton	23,301
Keith(2)	13,505
Kirkaldy	5,509
Laurencekirk	15,886
Leith	8,059
Leven	8,832
Locharbriggs	40,886
Turriff(2)	48,082
Newmachar(2)	9,923
Ormiston(2)	64,795
Penicuick	13,990
Stracathro(2)	63,815
Tranent	11,629
Bridlington	413
Belford	5,066
Blyth	3,863
Driffield(2)	28,574
Hull(3)	35,280
Selby	17,830
Barrow-on-Humber	7,445
Newcastle	9673
Scunthorpe	41,112
Alnwick	20,293
Easingwold	5,909
York	17,325
Tamworth	6,670
Retford	20,298
Boston	2,765
Grantham(2)	15,664
Hartlebury(2)	35,328
Hemswell	16,940
Telford	10,200
Honeybourne	17,051
Lincoln(2)	10,003
Long Eaton	17,629
Manby	11,128
Market Harborough	6,318
Ownby(2)	15,914
Normanton	8,373
Prees Heath	9,419
Sleaford	7,605
Skegness(3)	18,330
Uttoxeter	31,437
Wednesbury	32,858
West Bromwich	25,741
Wymewold	8,730
Harefield	21,851
Gloucester(2)	44,745
Membury	9,863
Newbury(2)	5,794
Exeter	4,536
Southampton	32,953
Swindon	3,213
Whitney(2)	54,426
Tuxford	6,029
Bardney	20,454
Birkenhead	15,786

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance Scheme

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) in how many instances in each of the past five years payments of hill livestock compensatory allowances have been withheld on conservation grounds;

(2) if he plans to amend the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme to take account of the problems of overgrazing and of consequential damage to semi-natural vegetation.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *301*]: The existing rules and procedures governing the payment of hill livestock compensatory allowances already take account of the desirability of avoiding overgrazing, and these are kept under review.

I regret that the detailed information requested by the hon. Member is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Environment (Sensitive Areas)

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums of money he has provisionally allocated for the establishment of environmentally sensitive areas within the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *302*]: The level of expenditure will depend on the detailed arrangements which we hope to introduce next year. However, we are anxious to ensure that this scheme gets off to a good start. We estimate that this would cost £6 million in a full year if, as intended, 5 or 6 acres are designated during 1986.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Visitors

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will enumerate the visitors to Northern Ireland during each year since, and including, 1969.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

Year	Numbers
1969	1,066,000
1970	977,000
1971	670,000
1972	435,000
1973	468,800
1974	486,800
1975	529,600
1976	432,000
1977	503,200
1978	628,000
1979	728,000
1980	710,000
1981	588,000

Year	Numbers
1982	712,000
1983	865,000
1984	908,000

DEFENCE

SACEUR (Modernisation)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects discussions on SACEUR's proposed modernisation plans;

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence when Her Majesty's Government expect to take the decision on implementation of SACEUR's proposals for modernisation, as detailed in the final communiqué of the recent nuclear planning group meetings dated 31 October.

Mr. Heseltine: At the NATO nuclear planning group meeting in Brussels on 29-30 October 1985, my Ministerial colleagues and I discussed further the measures which SACEUR had presented at the NPG meeting in Luxembourg earlier in the year to reduce the number of nuclear weapons in Europe and to ensure the survivability and effectiveness of those that remained. These recommendations are being pursued by SACEUR in co-ordination with the nations concerned. In some areas, the need for action will not arise for some years and therefore no early decisions are required. In other areas, SACEUR's proposals for reductions and improvements do require early decisions or are already being processed. For example, NATO's atomic demolition munitions have now been completely withdrawn. No decisions affecting the modernisation of weapons systems in service with British forces have been made, but we expect to begin discussions with SACEUR next spring about a number of recommendations which he has made to improve their survivability and effectiveness in the longer term.

Departmental Files (Access)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments are observed. They are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No. 21", issued by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, which give recommended procedures to safeguard data in computer installations. Copies of these guidelines have been placed in the House Library. Access to information on individuals held on manual files is limited strictly by the "need to know", and confidential and personally sensitive information is held under secure conditions.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence which United Kingdom companies, universities and research institutions have indicated to his Department that they are interested in competing for research contracts under the United States strategic defence initiative; and which of these are currently undertaking advanced information technology work under the Alvey programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A number of inquiries have been received from various sources concerning possible British participation in SDI research. Since the Government are still considering their position with regard to possible participation and in view of the confidential nature of some of the inquiries I am not able, at this stage, to provide the details requested.

Alvey Programme

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any additional funds have been made available after the beginning of the 1985-86 financial year to add to those originally allocated for work undertaken under the Alvey programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No additional defence funds have been made available.

Territorial Army

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received relating to the exclusion from membership of the Territorial Army of certain categories of public employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No representations have been received on the principle of excluding certain categories of public employee from joining the Territorial Army but there have been individual cases where a waiver has been sought.

Married Quarters (Woolwich)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many married quarters are provided by his Department in the Woolwich area; how many of these are *(a)* houses and *(b)* flats; and how many of each were vacant at the most recent available date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There are 787 married quarters provided by the Ministry of Defence in the Woolwich area, of which 466 are houses and 321 flats. At 15 November 1985, 54 houses and 85 flats were vacant, but of these 32 houses and 31 flats have been allocated to incoming families. A further 17 houses and 29 flats are empty while undergoing repairs, and the balance of 25 flats and 5 houses are held against future requirements.

Army (Sensitive Trades)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many applicants to the Army's sensitive trades have been rejected in each of the last 10 years by failing the nationality requirement.

Mr. Stanley: Statistics are not kept of the number of applicants rejected because of the nationality rules.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received in respect of the nationality rules governing admission to the Army's sensitive trades; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I am aware of one such case this year.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the nationality requirements for commissioned ranks in the Army's sensitive trades are the same as those for non-commissioned ranks.

Mr. Stanley: Yes.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many exemptions have been made to the nationality requirements in respect of the Army's sensitive trades in each of the last 10 years; and whether, for each case, he will state the nationality of the parents of the successful applicant.

Mr. Stanley: According to the Department's records, the number of waivers from the restricted nationality rule granted to applicants to the Army during the last eight years is given in the table below:

Year	*Waivers*
1978	69
1979	89
1980	115
1981	59
1982	46
1983	63
1984	55
*1985	30

* To 19 November.

Details of the nationality of the parents in cases where a waiver has been granted are not held centrally. These figures include waivers granted to applicants for a commission who are required to meet the restricted nationality rule, irrespective of the regiment or corps to which application is being made.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information is available to his Department in respect of the nationality requirements imposed by members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation for admission to the sensitive trades of their armies.

Mr. Stanley: This information is not held in the Department.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to changing the nationality rules governing admission to the Army's sensitive trades to bring these rules into line with those for general admission to the Army.

Mr. Stanley: The nationality rules have been reviewed from time to time since they were introduced, the last occasion being in 1982 when it was decided to retain the present requirements.

Army (Recruiting Policy)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on recruiting non-Caucasian British citizens into *(a)* the Brigade of Guards and *(b)* the Household Cavalry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Entry to all regiments or corps of the British Army is regardless of ethnic origin, but is subject inter alia to the Army nationality rules.

RAF Greenham

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether RAF Greenham has maintained a complete training programme since July.

Mr. Stanley: We do not give details of the training exercises conducted by nuclear missile units.

Cyprus Secrets Trial

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether the seven acquitted defendants in the Cyprus Official Secrets Act trial will receive all pay and allowances due to them for the period between their arrest and their acquittal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether the seniority payments due to the seven acquitted defendants in the Cyprus Official Secrets Act trial are at the same level as they would have been had proceedings not been taken against them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I shall answer shortly.

Emergency Planning

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's role in emergency planning in times of crisis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: In common with other Government Departments the Ministry of Defence has contingency plans and procedures for use in times of crisis. These plans are kept under review and, where appropriate, periodically exercised.

Expenditure White Paper

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to produce a new White Paper on defence expenditure.

Mr. Stanley: The cash provision for defence expenditure to 1988-89 was given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his autumn statement on 12 November. Further details will be given in the public expenditure White Paper, to be published early in the new year.

NATO

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has been consulted by the United States Government as to the number of ground-launched United States Air Force cruise missiles held at a high state of readiness or quick action alert, at RAF Greenham Common; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: United States ground-launched cruise missiles based in the United Kingdom are assigned to SACEUR in support of the NATO Alliance. The responsibility for detailed operational planning affecting these and other nuclear forces so assigned is a matter for SACEUR.

Trident

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the current cost of the Trident programme and if he will list *(a)* what sum and proportion of that cost will be spent in British firms (i) operating in the United Kingdom and (ii) operating as subsidiaries in the United States of America and *(b)* the number of jobs that will be created in the United Kingdom both (i) directly and (ii) indirectly as a result of this total expenditure.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for defence announced a cost estimate for Trident of £9,285 million at 1984-85 prices and an exchange rate of £1 = $1·38 on 29 January 1985 at columns 134-137. Of this estimate, approximately 55 per cent. or over £5,100 million by value, is planned to be spent in the United Kingdom and is expected to create on average about 9,000 direct, and 7,000 indirect, job opportunities in United Kingdom firms during the period of procurement. These numbers will rise to about 17,000 and 13,000 respectively during the peak years.

The above figures exclude the benefit to British firms of sub contracts obtained on the United States Trident II programme under the Trident industrial participation arrangements. It is not possible at this stage to assess the total value of work that will be won. A small proportion of the contracts placed to date has been awarded to United Kingdom subsidiaries operating in the United States.

Establishments (Location and Dispersal)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the proposals to transfer defence establishments to the north of England.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A mixture of historical and practical reasons account for the present concentration of defence establishments in southern England. A more even spread across the regions would be preferable, particularly in areas of high unemployment, and we are examining the scope for this. Proposals must, of course, be justifiable in both economic, and defence, as well as regional, terms

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the costs of hiring a firm of outside consultants to advise on location and dispersal of Ministry of Defence establishments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not the practice to disclose details of payments between the Ministry and a contractor.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence what account he took, prior to deciding to engage a firm of chartered surveyors, to advise on location and dispersal of Ministry of Defence establishments, of the availability of expertise in this matter with the Civil Service.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There is considerable expertise in estate management within the Civil Service, but on this occasion it was thought right to supplement this advice with the view of a leading professional in private practice.

Royal Ordnance Factories

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the present viability of royal ordnance factories; and what effects he forecasts will result from privatisation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The change of the royal ordnance factories' status to that of an independent, commercial Companies Act company has improved flexibility and opened up new trading opportunities, thus enhancing the organisation's overall prospects. Privatisation will be the final step to virtually complete commercial freedom to secure a prosperous future, but at all times success will depend on the company's ability to exploit commercial opportunities.

Mr. Peter Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which royal ordnance factories at present maintain strategic capacity;

(2) at which royal ordnance factories he proposes to maintain strategic capacity.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Detailed arrangements of this kind are a contractual matter between the Ministry of Defence and Royal Ordnance plc.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he proposes that Coopers and Lybrand will issue the prospectus for privatisation of the royal ordnance factories before he makes an announcement on strategic capacity.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the usual way I would expect a prospectus for the public offer for sale of shares in Royal Ordnance plc to be issued by a merchant bank acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence. Coopers and Lybrand are not a merchant bank. The timing of the issue of a prospectus would depend on the timing of the sale; which as I indicated to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on 22 October 1985 at column 141 is subject to a number of factors.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ensure that the prospectus for royal ordnance factories contains the full details of accountancy figures.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The intention of the hon. Member's question is not clear. A prospectus is a formal document which must meet certain statutory and quasi-statutory regulations. It follows that the Royal Ordnance plc prospectus would contain sufficient accounting detail to meet these requirements, but the precise amount of information will be a matter for judgment in the light of advice from our merchant bank.

Air Defence

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on United Kingdom air defence capability.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 22 October at column *141*.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what agreement he has reached with the United States Secretary of State on strategic defence initiative research participation.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None. Following my right hon. Friend's recent talks with Secretary Weinberger in Brussels the Government are still considering the question of participation in research.

United Kingdom Land Forces (Germany)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the operational mobility of United Kingdom land forces in Germany.

Mr. Stanley: Operational mobility is a central consideration in the planning for and equipment of the United Kingdom land forces in Germany. This is reflected, for example, in the introduction of new

equipments such as Challenger, Saxon, MCV 80 and Tracked Rapier all of which will significantly enhance the mobility of our forces, and in the provision of specialist support equipment to sustain the mobility of fighting units.

Spare Munitions

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has received any representations from royal ordnance factories concerning spare munitions capacity.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the total cost of the European fighter aircraft programme to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. As I explained to the hon. Member on 22 October 1985 at columns *141-142*, a report from industry on the project definition phase of the European fighter aircraft is not expected before next summer.

India (Defence Minister)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with India's Defence Minister.

Mr. Stanley: In the course of this year, my right hon. Friend has had discussions on defence matters with Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, during his visit to London in October, and with the previous Defence Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, during his visit in June.

Reserve Forces

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made concerning the expansion of reserve forces.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since 1979 the strength and role of the volunteer reserve forces have been greatly expanded. Principal developments include the following:

The Territorial Army (TA) has been increased from a strength of about 59,000 in 1979 to some 74,000 now, with a target of 86,000 by 1990;

A new home service force has been raised as part of the TA, and is now some 3,5000 strong;

The strength of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) is being increased from 5,226 to 7,800, and it is being re-equipped with new minesweepers and patrol craft;

The Royal Marines Reserve is expanding from a strength of 1,047 to 1,580;

The Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) has raised nine new squadrons, including six RAuxAF Regiment field squadrons, and trials have been announced into the wider employment of the RAuxAF and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR). These measures have substantially enhanced the vital contribution made by the volunteer reserve forces to our defence effort.

Ministry of Defence Police

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will publish the Broadbent report on the future of the Ministry of Defence police;

(2) What decision he has made on the future of the Ministry of Defence police, following the report of the Broadbent inquiry.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Broadbent report confirmed the continuing need for the Ministry of Defence police. Its detailed recommendations are being studied. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for defence will arrange for the report to be published when this study is complete.

School Leavers

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to seek to recruit large numbers of unemployed school leavers into the support arms of the forces.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The MOD currently operates the armed services youth training scheme (ASYTS) which is parallel to, but separate from, the Manpower Services Commission youth training scheme (YTS). Consideration is being given to the possible extension of the existing ASYTS from one to two years in line with that for the MSC YTS announced by the Chancellor in his Budget statement earlier this year. No decisions have yet been taken and no wider scheme is under consideration.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of consultants engaged by his Department in relation to the management or proposed contracting out of the royal dockyards specifying the period of consultancy and the total cost of each consultancy to public funds.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have included in the *Official Report* a list of consultants engaged in relation to the management or proposed introduction of commercial managment into the royal dockyards, together with details of the scope of their activities. On costs, I am not able to release details of individual contracts but the total has not changed from the figures I gave to the hon. Member on 18 November 1985 at column *96*.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis classified information will be made available to private companies which have expressed interest in tendering for the contracts to run the royal dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Classified information on the royal dockyards is being released to private companies on exactly the same basis — and under the same controls — as it is released to any other potential defence contractor.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will postpone all visits by private companies to the royal dockyards until the Dockyard Services Bill has been passed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No, Sir.

Retirements and Redundancies

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* tables

showing for (i) the Ministry of Defence and (ii) the royal dockyards, for calendar years 1978 to 1984, the number of non-industrial civil servants by grade and age who have *(a)* taken early retirement and *(b)* been made redundant.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 November 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Attorney-General if he will list the organisations of which membership is a disqualification for appointment as a justice of the peace.

The Solicitor-General: Disqualifications for appointment as a justice of the peace are listed in paragraph 4.14 of the directions for advisory committees on justices of the peace, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Fraud Investigation Group

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Attorney-General what resources have been allocated to the newly created fraud investigation group within the prosecution service; and on what basis these resources were allocated.

The Solicitor-General: The fraud investigation group was set up in January 1985. Staff allocated to the group was as follows: a principal assistant director (grade 3) as controller and two assistant directors (grade 5) each heading a division of four senior legal assistants, dealing with the largest cases arising in, respectively, the Metropolitan and City police force areas and in the provinces. There is also a third, general fraud division, headed by an assistant director (grade 5) and having four senior legal assistants assigned to it.

The fraud investigation group divisions share with the general fraud division the services of a non-professional support team consisting of a senior executive officer in charge of about twenty five other staff.

From 1 February the fraud division were allocated the services of three accountants on secondment from the Department of Trade and Industry, one from accountancy services division and two from the Government insolvency service. As from January 1986 the fraud divisions are also to have the services of an examiner on secondment from the Government insolvency service to assist the accountants, and two further examiners will join them in February.

These resources have been allocated to the group in order to facilitate effective investigation — and if necessary prosecution — of major fraud cases. The lawyers and accountants concerned have been chosen with their experience in or aptitude for fraud cases in mind, but the number of lawyers and of non-professional support staff, available has been governed by the calls made on the director's staff by the setting up and staffing of the Crown prosecution service as a whole.

Peter Cameron Webb Syndicate

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General (1) when the Director of Public Prosecutions first received representations concerning the affairs of the Peter Cameron Webb syndicate at Lloyds;

(2) if he will make a statement on progress in pursuing the case of the Peter Cameron Webb syndicate;

(3) whether any steps have been taken to seek to extradite Peter Cameron Webb; and if he will make a statement;

(4) whether any steps have been taken to seek to extradite T. Dixon, late of Peter Cameron Webb, and if he will make a statement;

(5) if the Director of Public Prosecutions has recommended that any charges should be brought against any person or any action should be taken against any person in respect of the Lloyds and Peter Cameron Webb papers before him; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: I take references in the questions to the Lloyds case to refer to investigations concerning the affairs of the PCW syndicate and Alexander Howden. These matters were first referred to the director in 1982. Two separate but related investigations are being conducted under the auspices of a fraud investigation group formed for that purpose. It comprises police officers, members of the director's professional staff, accountants and very experienced specialist members of the bar. Despite the considerable financial and manpower resources devoted to the case serious delay has been imposed upon the progress of these investigations by the necessity of securing, in a form admissible in any criminal proceedings in England, evidence which hitherto has only been available from witnesses located within the jurisdiction of a foreign state. The availability of such evidence has resulted in insufficient evidence being available to justify certain criminal proceedings or an application for extradition of any person on certain grounds. No power exists whereby investigators in this country may compel the productiin of such evidence here. Investigators accordingly depend in such cases upon the assistance of the relevant foreign authorities, who themselves—however much they may wish to assist — are bound by their municipal rules relating to the granting of immunity from civil suits brought within their own jurisdiction, for example for breach of confidentiality. Nevertheless, in the present cases a way is vigorously being sought to overcome the problems I have mentioned connected with securing evidence within a foreign jurisdiction. The fraud investigation group is hopeful that such a way will be found, and it shares my own strong desire that it shall be. I plan next to discuss these investigations with the fraud investigation group on 27 November. Criminal proceedings will certainly be instituted if and so soon as evidence justifying them becomes available.

Pahoomal Family

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Attorney-General if the Director of Public Prosecutions has begun extradition proceedings against any member of the Pahoomal family; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions has concluded that there is no witness from whom evidence is available sufficient to support the commencement of extradition proceedings in respect of any member of the Pahoomal family.

Non-solicitor Conveyancers

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General if the Lord Chancellor will appoint representatives of non-solicitor conveyancers to the Council of Licensed Conveyancers in the initial period in accordance with schedule 3, paragraph 2(2) of the Administration of Justice Act 1985.

The Solicitor-General: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to schedule 3, paragraph 3(2) of the Act which defines "the initial period". The Lord Chancellor hopes to announce the membership of the council in the near future.

Cyprus Secrets Trial

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General what was the daily cost of keeping each of the seven acquitted defendants in the Cyprus Official Secrets Act trial in custody.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.

The defendants in the Cyprus Offical Secrets Act trial were held in custody for varying periods in either Wormwood Scrubs prison, Brixton prison or, very briefly, Ashford remand centre. Six of the defendants were released on bail following a period in custody. It is not possible to calculate the costs of keeping individual persons in custody, but, based on figures which are available for the financial year 1984-85, it is estimated that the average daily cost of maintaining a person in one of these establishments was about £50.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Polluted Wine

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what further reports of possible incidents of polluted wine his Department has received in the last months;

(2) what new procedures his Department has introduced to seek to guard against the possible importation of polluted wine;

(3) whether he is satisfied with the efficacy of present arrangements to guard against the importation of polluted wine.

Mrs. Fenner: Under the Food Act 1984, enforcement authorities have power to sample and analyse all food and drink intended for sale for human consumption. These powers extend to port health authorities in respect of imported foods and drink. I have already passed all the relevent information I have on contaminated wines to the port health authorities and I am satisfied that they will carry out the necessary checks in the course of their normal duties.

I have recently received some reports from abroad of incidents concerning contaminated wines but no similar discoveries have been made in the United Kingdom. I am nevertheless making further inquiries where necessary.

Ethiopian Tinned Meat

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to suspend the import of Ethiopian tinned meat into the United Kingdom and other European Community countries until such time as the Ethiopian Government can show that no grain fit for human consumption is being used to fatten cattle for export from that country.

Mrs. Fenner: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Wildlife (Poisons)

Dr. David Clark asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many reports of incidents involving the misuse of poisons or stupefying substances on wildlife have been made to his Department in the following years: 1983, 1984 and 1985 to the most recent date for which figures are available; and in how many cases the details were passed to the police for investigation.

Mrs. Fenner: The number of incidents involving the misuse of poisons or stupefying substances on wildlife reported to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and Welsh Office Agricultural Department in the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 to date and the number of those cases reported to the police in those years are as follows:

	1983	*1984*	**1985*
Number of incidents in which the suspected misuse of poisons or stupefying substances on wildlife were reported to MAFF:			
England	73	53	55
Wales	14	14	4
	87	67	59
Number of cases passed to the police for investigation:			
England	41	39	43
Wales	5	13	3
	46	52	46

* To 22 November 1985.

Battery Hens

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the space which battery hens would require to have to ruffle their feathers, to stretch their bodies, to stretch their wings and to turn around, respectively.

Mrs. Fenner: I have made no estimates and I am not aware that conclusive scientific advice is available.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current minimum space provided under current regulations for hens in battery cages.

Mrs. Fenner: There are no United Kingdom statutory minimum space allowances for hens in battery cages. However, the current welfare code for domestic fowls recommends allowances based on birds' body weight.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what progress was made in the discussions in the Council of Ministers on 18 and 19 November on Common Market regulations on the minimum space for hens in battery cages; what proposal for such minimum space was presented by the European Economic Community Commission; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take steps to increase the minimum space available to hens in battery cages; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: No decisions were taken at the last Council meeting and this topic will be re-examined at the December Council. We shall continue to press for the early adoption of a directive laying down minimum welfare standards for laying hens in battery cages. The proposed directive would deal with space allowances, cage height and floor slope, feed trough lengths, enforcement measures and husbandry provisions. (The present focus of discussions is a minimum space allowance of 450 sq cm per bird, based on earlier assessments made by the Commission.) We believe that a Community-wide approach is the right one.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the number of hens in battery cages in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Fenner: We estimate that there are 47 to 48 million.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to ban the import of eggs from European Economic Community nations which have lower spaces for the containment of hens in battery cages than the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I have no such plans and am seeking a Community agreement. Such import restrictions would be incompatible with the treaty.

Untreated Milk

Mr. O'Brien asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many deaths in Scotland from 1979 to August 1983 were caused by, or contributed to by, untreated milk; and what has been the number of deaths since August 1983 through untreated milk.

Mr. Gummer: Between 1979 and 1983, nine deaths in Scotland were attributed to untreated milk. Since 1983 there have been no such deaths, though there have been outbreaks of milk-borne disease as a result of the consumption of untreated milk by farm workers.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many deaths occurred in England and Wales in 1984 as a result of untreated milk or where untreated milk was a contributory factor.

Mr. Gummer: There were seven deaths associated with consumption of untreated milk in 1984, all in west Yorkshire.

Eggs Authority

Sir Hector Monro asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is now able to make a statement about the future of the Eggs Authority.

Mr. Jopling: Yes. When I announced publication of the report of the review committee under the chairmanship of the right hon. Lord Peyton of Yeovil, I said that I would be giving the egg industry an opportunity to consider and comment on the committee's recommendation that the authority should be dissolved.

My agricultural colleagues and I have taken careful note of the many representations we have received, which revealed differences of view within the egg industry. We do not consider that we should be justified in retaining a statutory body which does not command the widespread support of the industry concerned. We have accordingly decided to bring the authority to an end and propose to introduce a clause into the Agriculture Bill for this purpose.

The review committee was impressed by the potential of the British Egg Industry Council which already brings together, on a voluntary basis, all the major associations in the egg industry. My colleagues and I agree that the council provides scope for the industry to consider collectively its needs for the future and how these can best be met. This will include the means by which the egg industry would raise any funds it wished to devote to research and development in the light of the Government's recently announced policy of looking to the agricultural sector to shoulder some part of this cost. We shall be ready to hold discussions with the industry and BEIC about these matters. We shall consider sympathetically whatever arrangements the egg industry work out. One possiblity would be to use the Industrial Organisation and Development Act 1947 to set up a development council. On the other hand, the industry might prefer voluntary arrangements.

Sugar

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects the Council of Agriculture Ministers to discuss proposals for a new EEC sugar regime; if he will specify the considerations which prevented decisions being reached at the Council Meeting on 18 and 19 November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The next Agriculture Council discussion on the sugar regime proposals will take place on 9-10 December. No agreement was reached at the November Council because of the need for further work to be done on the Commission's proposals on production levies and related issues including the proposal on sugar for the chemical industry. It remains the Government's objective to secure satisfactory agreements on these proposals which take account of the interests of both producers and users.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Decisions

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning decisions made by local authorities have been overturned by his Department in the past two years; and if he will break this figure down authority by authority.

Mr. Tracey: Planning appeal statistics are published annually in the Chief Planning Inspector's reports. In 1983 and 1984 the number of appeals decided and allowed, and the proportion allowed, under section 36 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, in England were:

	Decided	*Allowed*	*Percentage Allowed*
1983	11,221	3,633	32·4
1984	11,643	3,773	32·4

The Table gives details of appeals decided and allowed by each local planning authority in the periods, October

1983—September 1984 and October 1984—September 1985. Conclusions should be drawn with care from these figures because of the small number of appeals made annually against the decisions of most local planning authorities.

Planning appeals: by local authority

	October 1983 to September 1984			October 1984 to September 1985		
	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed
Avon	0	0	—	2	0	0
Bath	23	7	30	18	6	33
Bristol	64	21	33	87	49	56
Kingswood	20	5	25	16	6	38
Northavon	64	20	31	64	15	23
Wansdyke	45	15	33	42	15	36
Woodspring	69	28	41	79	31	39
Bedfordshire	0	0	—	0	0	—
North Bedfordshire	28	14	50	70	18	26
Luton	21	7	33	57	26	46
Mid Bedfordshire	34	14	41	67	21	31
South Bedfordshire	36	10	28	40	8	20
Berkshire	0	0	—	3	0	0
Bracknell	30	15	50	36	20	56
Newbury	58	15	26	79	29	37
Reading	60	22	37	73	33	45
Slough	13	6	46	10	6	60
Windsor and Maidenhead	87	22	25	99	36	36
Wokingham	76	21	28	69	21	30
Buckinghamshire	1	0	0	0	0	—
Aylesbury Vale	45	14	31	49	23	47
South Buckinghamshire	49	7	14	62	27	44
Chiltern	46	18	39	73	29	40
Milton Keynes	24	6	25	18	9	50
Wycombe	46	17	37	68	21	31
Cambridgeshire	2	0	0	0	0	—
Cambridge	26	7	27	36	17	47
East Cambridgeshire	32	9	28	27	9	33
Fenland	10	3	30	10	3	30
Huntingdon	41	15	37	36	11	31
Peterborough	11	3	27	22	10	45
South Cambridgeshire	79	20	25	106	31	29
Cheshire	0	0	—	1	1	100
Chester	47	23	49	36	10	28
Congleton	27	8	30	23	7	30
Crewe and Nantwich	13	4	31	14	4	29
Ellesmere Port and Neston	17	9	53	23	11	48
Halton	12	8	67	8	1	13
Macclesfield	64	21	33	69	28	41
Vale Royal	15	6	40	33	14	42
Warrington	41	15	37	37	18	49
Cleveland	0	0	—	1	1	100
Hartlepool	8	3	38	16	13	81
Langbaurgh	20	6	30	19	8	42
Middlesbrough	14	5	36	13	4	31
Stockton-on-Tees	19	8	42	20	6	30
Cornwall	0	0	—	0	0	—
Caradon	29	9	31	37	5	14
Carrick	45	15	33	64	23	36
Kerrier	58	14	24	53	15	28
North Cornwall	25	3	12	29	7	24
Penwith	10	2	20	13	4	31
Restormel	55	10	18	58	23	40
Isles of Scilly	1	1	100	6	2	33
Cumbria	0	0	—	2	1	50
Allerdale	12	3	25	25	6	24
Barrow-in-Furness	11	5	45	12	5	42
Carlisle	9	0	0	11	4	36
Copeland	3	2	67	16	6	38
Eden	13	6	46	7	2	29
South Lakeland	39	10	26	50	22	44

	October 1983 to September 1984			October 1984 to September 1985		
	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed
Derbyshire						
Amber Valley	0	0	—	1	1	100
Bolsover	22	5	23	26	8	31
Chesterfield	6	3	50	17	5	29
Derby	7	1	14	12	5	42
Erewash	15	5	33	14	3	21
High Peak	20	8	40	27	16	59
North East Derbyshire	19	8	42	25	6	24
South Derbyshire	32	8	25	32	12	38
West Derbyshire	16	5	31	19	4	21
	14	4	29	22	9	41
Devon						
East Devon	2	1	50	0	0	—
Exeter	58	8	14	63	17	27
North Devon	33	11	33	54	17	31
Plymouth	43	19	44	49	15	31
South Hams	30	7	23	29	10	34
Teignbridge	74	25	34	63	18	29
Mid Devon	43	12	28	50	15	30
Torbay	16	4	25	20	8	40
Torridge	74	24	32	87	29	33
West Devon	18	5	28	22	14	64
	16	4	25	14	2	14
Dorset						
Bournemouth	0	0	0	0	0	0
Christchurch	64	19	30	67	24	36
North Dorset	23	8	35	34	11	32
Poole	26	11	42	38	9	34
Purbeck	56	21	38	42	12	29
West Dorset	22	3	14	16	3	19
Weymouth and Portland	51	25	49	55	10	18
Wimborne	10	3	30	21	4	19
	58	20	34	65	21	32
County Durham						
Chester-le-Street	2	0	0	3	1	33
Darlington	5	1	20	5	4	80
Derwentside	17	3	18	19	7	37
Durham	12	1	8	9	3	33
Easington	7	0	0	4	1	25
Sedgefield	5	1	20	9	3	33
Teesdale	11	5	45	9	5	56
Wear Valley	9	2	22	6	0	0
	7	3	43	9	2	22
East Sussex						
Brighton	0	0	0	0	0	0
Eastbourne	26	15	58	31	15	48
Hastings	22	8	36	26	11	42
Hove	29	14	48	22	8	36
Lewes	11	3	27	27	8	30
Rother	51	19	37	28	9	32
Wealden	35	9	26	46	11	24
	79	22	28	77	30	39
Essex						
Basildon	3	1	33	2	0	0
Braintree	81	43	53	94	50	53
Brentwood	38	10	26	50	15	30
Castle Point	46	20	43	51	18	35
Chelmsford	42	12	29	47	15	32
Colchester	100	31	31	118	47	40
Epping Forest	30	9	30	48	16	33
Harlow	62	12	19	104	33	32
Maldon	1	1	100	8	4	50
Rochford	39	13	33	58	24	41
Southend-on-Sea	21	8	38	34	10	29
Tendring	7	3	43	12	3	25
Thurrock	39	14	36	69	20	29
Uttesford	31	8	26	57	13	23
	35	9	26	46	15	33
Gloucestershire						
Cheltenham	0	0	—	2	1	50
Cotswold	23	7	30	20	7	35
Forest of Dean	35	11	31	49	14	29
Gloucester	57	11	19	73	30	41
Stroud	3	0	0	15	9	60
	62	26	42	62	20	32

	October 1983 to September 1984			October 1984 to September 1985		
	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed
Tewkesbury	35	13	37	50	15	30
Hampshire	1	0	0	2	1	50
Basingstoke and Deane	64	17	27	90	31	34
East Hampshire	56	19	34	57	17	30
Eastleigh	24	5	21	23	9	39
Fareham	18	3	17	47	16	34
Gosport	2	0	0	6	1	17
Hart	57	29	51	51	23	45
Havant	18	4	22	40	10	25
New Forest	78	22	28	132	47	36
Portsmouth	27	10	37	27	8	30
Rushmoor	20	4	20	29	13	45
Southampton	29	8	28	39	10	26
Test Valley	45	18	40	58	19	33
Winchester	57	19	33	66	19	29
Hereford and Worcester	0	0	—	4	2	50
Bromsgrove	32	5	16	39	12	31
Hereford	8	1	13	16	3	19
Leominster	15	2	13	15	3	20
Malvern Hills	39	11	28	46	12	26
Redditch	7	2	29	13	2	15
South Herefordshire	17	4	24	26	5	19
Worcester	9	4	44	23	6	26
Wychavon	56	21	38	64	19	30
Wyre Forest	25	5	20	17	6	35
Hertfordshire	0	0	—	3	0	0
Broxbourne	22	4	18	23	8	35
Dacorum	61	20	33	46	18	39
East Hertfordshire	45	10	22	64	29	45
Hertsmere	36	14	39	29	13	45
North Hertfordshire	31	12	39	52	25	48
St. Albans	48	18	38	75	36	48
Stevenage	9	1	11	11	8	73
Three Rivers	45	15	33	51	20	39
Watford	18	5	28	17	7	41
Welwyn Hatfield	37	13	35	33	13	39
Humberside	0	0	—	0	0	—
East Yorks borough of Beverley	42	19	45	33	13	39
Boothferry	11	4	36	20	6	30
Cleethorpes	12	4	33	15	4	27
Glanford	10	5	50	9	5	56
Great Grimsby	5	3	60	7	5	71
Holderness	11	2	18	14	4	29
Kingston upon Hull	15	7	47	15	7	47
East Yorkshire	12	5	42	23	9	39
Scunthorpe	1	0	0	3	0	0
Isle of Wight	0	0	—	0	0	—
Medina	17	3	18	26	8	31
South Wight	31	6	19	27	5	19
Kent	2	0	0	0	0	—
Ashford	27	3	11	62	17	27
Canterbury	22	8	36	61	18	30
Dartford	21	3	14	28	8	29
Dover	26	6	23	41	14	34
Gillingham	9	2	22	23	7	30
Gravesham	11	2	18	22	6	27
Maidstone	47	11	23	72	27	38
Rochester upon Medway	15	4	27	28	16	57
Sevenoaks	50	16	32	84	26	31
Shepway	29	10	34	42	16	38
Swale	26	5	19	45	12	27
Thanet	13	9	69	26	10	38
Tonbridge and Malling	14	6	43	42	10	24
Tunbridge Wells	44	19	43	71	23	32
Lancashire	2	1	50	1	0	0
Blackburn	22	8	36	31	12	39
Blackpool	28	10	36	32	10	31
Burnley	13	3	23	10	5	50

	October 1983 to September 1984			October 1984 to September 1985		
	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed
Chorley	24	5	21	21	8	38
Fylde	8	1	13	29	8	28
Hyndburn	12	2	17	18	8	44
Lancaster	28	8	29	26	7	27
Pendle	18	4	22	12	5	42
Preston	23	10	43	25	9	36
Ribble Valley	27	4	15	29	8	28
Rossendale	7	4	57	10	3	30
South Ribble	25	6	24	31	16	52
West Lancashire	25	4	16	32	10	31
Wyre	43	21	49	51	19	37
Leicestershire	4	2	50	0	0	—
Blaby	17	7	41	23	10	43
Charnwood	31	5	16	31	9	29
Harborough	15	3	20	24	7	29
Hinckley and Bosworth	17	5	29	24	7	29
Leicester	33	10	30	29	11	38
Melton	16	7	44	22	9	41
North West Leicestershire	26	7	27	26	6	23
Oadby and Wigston	13	7	54	16	6	38
Rutland	12	3	25	12	5	42
Lincolnshire	0	0	—	0	0	—
Boston	6	1	17	8	1	13
East Lindsey	71	22	31	69	27	39
Lincoln	20	12	60	8	3	38
North Kesteven	28	7	25	29	7	24
South Holland	6	3	50	19	5	26
South Kesteven	25	4	16	43	16	37
West Lindsey	28	7	25	26	9	35
Norfolk	1	1	100	1	0	0
Breckland	32	7	22	55	14	25
Broadland	37	9	24	37	16	43
Great Yarmouth	26	4	15	39	15	38
North Norfolk	52	11	21	63	24	38
Norwich	15	4	27	22	6	27
South Norfolk	45	11	24	60	16	27
King's Lynn and West Norfolk	38	14	37	55	25	45
North Yorkshire	0	0	—	1	0	0
Craven	25	4	16	28	10	36
Hambleton	29	7	24	26	5	19
Harrogate	46	14	30	70	31	44
Richmondshire	8	3	38	11	5	45
Ryedale	19	4	21	39	10	26
Scarborough	22	6	27	25	8	32
Selby	18	5	28	25	12	48
York	18	11	61	14	7	50
Northamptonshire	0	0	—	0	0	—
Corby	1	0	0	3	0	0
Daventry	37	13	35	40	13	32
East Northamptonshire	9	1	11	6	1	17
Kettering	19	7	37	19	8	42
Northampton	15	3	20	15	11	73
South Northamptonshire	27	7	26	30	7	23
Wellingborough	10	2	20	20	7	35
Northumberland	0	0	—	2	2	100
Alnwick	4	1	25	8	2	25
Berwick-upon-Tweed	3	0	0	3	0	0
Blyth Valley	6	4	67	2	1	50
Castle Morpeth	27	15	56	24	10	42
Tynedale	11	3	27	13	1	08
Wansbeck	3	1	33	3	1	33
Nottinghamshire	1	0	0	0	0	—
Ashfield	22	1	05	17	8	47
Bassetlaw	37	21	57	39	10	26
Broxtowe	13	3	23	16	5	31
Gedling	14	1	07	19	7	37
Mansfield	12	6	50	11	4	36
Newark	24	6	25	38	14	37

	October 1983 to September 1984			October 1984 to September 1985		
	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed
Nottingham	22	9	41	21	7	33
Rushcliffe	27	4	15	31	7	23
Oxfordshire	0	0	—	2	1	50
Cherwell	39	16	41	47	15	32
Oxford	19	6	32	24	5	21
South Oxfordshire	58	9	16	96	27	28
Vale of White Horse	48	19	40	52	15	29
West Oxfordshire	38	15	39	63	18	29
Shropshire	0	0	—	0	0	—
Bridgnorth	29	4	14	28	13	46
North Shropshire	15	6	40	17	4	24
Oswestry	6	1	17	10	2	20
Shrewsbury and Atcham	22	12	55	38	12	32
South Shropshire	7	1	14	9	2	22
The Wrekin	19	6	32	16	4	25
Somerset	0	0	—	2	1	50
Mendip	33	6	18	40	12	30
Sedgemoor	33	11	33	39	11	28
Taunton Deane	25	2	08	24	12	50
West Somerset	10	4	40	15	2	13
Yeovil	56	15	27	60	17	28
Staffordshire	2	0	0	3	2	67
Cannock Chase	14	5	36	18	9	50
East Staffordshire	13	6	46	24	6	25
Lichfield	31	14	45	31	8	26
Newcastle-under-Lyme	26	9	35	37	17	46
Stafford	47	14	30	43	17	40
South Staffordshire	41	11	27	31	14	45
Staffordshire Moorlands	26	7	27	31	11	35
Stoke-on-Trent	24	6	25	30	7	23
Tamworth	3	1	33	6	2	33
Suffolk	0	0	—	0	0	—
Babergh	33	6	18	54	16	30
Forest Heath	10	6	60	20	9	45
Ipswich	23	8	35	22	9	41
Mid Suffolk	20	5	25	18	4	22
St. Edmundsbury	22	6	27	20	5	25
Suffolk Coastal	24	10	42	40	10	25
Waveney	19	5	26	21	9	43
Surrey	0	0	—	2	1	50
Elmbridge	53	26	49	45	21	47
Epsom and Ewell	22	12	55	19	7	37
Guildford	79	21	27	88	23	26
Mole Valley	42	4	10	63	12	19
Reigate and Banstead	73	31	42	79	35	44
Runnymede	49	7	14	58	22	38
Spelthorne	20	8	40	27	7	26
Surrey Heath	37	8	22	46	16	35
Tandridge	83	19	23	85	19	22
Waverley	66	13	20	87	27	31
Woking	31	10	32	52	18	35
Warwickshire	1	0	0	1	1	100
North Warwickshire	23	4	17	17	7	41
Nuneaton and Bedworth	14	4	29	21	8	38
Rugby	24	10	42	19	8	42
Stratford-on-Avon	65	28	43	53	16	30
Warwick	23	7	30	41	14	34
West Sussex	0	0	—	1	1	100
Adur	21	6	29	25	9	36
Arun	39	15	38	41	13	32
Chichester	66	13	20	73	26	36
Crawley	33	15	45	29	17	59
Horsham	65	22	34	93	31	33
Mid Sussex	77	21	27	56	17	30
Worthing	18	6	33	30	8	27
Wiltshire	0	0	—	1	1	100

	October 1983 to September 1984			October 1984 to September 1985		
	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed
Kennet	28	5	18	35	10	29
North Wiltshire	50	16	32	61	18	30
Salisbury	33	7	21	51	19	37
Thamesdown	24	5	21	36	15	42
West Wiltshire	34	14	41	43	16	37
Greater Manchester						
Bolton	4	2	50	5	1	20
Bury	43	12	28	52	27	52
Manchester	15	7	47	18	5	28
Oldham	19	9	47	20	7	35
Rochdale	23	10	43	29	11	38
Salford	24	12	50	19	5	26
Stockport	23	9	39	27	9	33
Tameside	43	14	33	39	13	33
Trafford	21	6	29	24	8	33
Wigan	32	14	44	35	11	31
Merseyside	28	8	29	24	10	42
Knowsley	2	1	50	0	0	—
Liverpool	9	1	11	10	3	30
St. Helens	32	19	59	30	17	57
Sefton	19	6	32	30	14	47
Wirral	33	14	42	33	14	42
South Yorkshire	58	17	29	38	14	37
Barnsley	1	0	0	1	0	0
Doncaster	30	8	27	40	15	38
Rotherham	46	21	46	51	17	33
Sheffield	27	4	15	23	8	35
Tyne and Wear	75	25	33	67	24	36
Gateshead	0	0	—	0	0	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	20	9	45	20	6	30
North Tyneside	10	2	20	14	5	36
South Tyneside	20	10	50	27	10	37
Sunderland	7	3	43	13	5	38
West Midlands	7	2	29	19	3	16
Birmingham	0	0	—	0	0	—
Coventry	89	39	44	109	51	47
Dudley	31	13	42	35	8	23
Sandwell	21	8	38	25	5	20
Solihull	13	5	38	22	4	18
Walsall	50	17	34	55	25	45
Wolverhampton	29	12	41	24	14	58
West Yorkshire	31	11	35	29	10	34
Bradford	0	0	—	4	1	25
Calderdale	59	12	20	66	20	30
Kirklees	29	6	21	26	11	42
Leeds	67	19	28	69	25	36
Wakefield	91	39	43	107	30	28
	49	13	27	49	10	20
Greater London Council	0	0	—	0	0	—
City of London	5	2	40	4	0	0
Barking and Dagenham	6	2	33	10	4	40
Barnet	55	17*	31	62	26	42
Bexley	39	10	26	35	13	37
Brent	23	15	65	44	19	43
Bromley	119	35	29	200	72	36
Camden	83	44	53	78	45	58
Croydon	57	20	35	78	26	33
Ealing	45	14	31	58	28	48
Enfield	64	26	41	82	30	37
Greenwich	22	13	59	62	40	65
Hackney	16	9	56	23	6	26
Hammersmith and Fulham	32	19	59	65	33	51
Haringey	25	8	32	34	13	38
Harrow	31	13	42	48	27	56
Havering	36	16	44	52	17	33
Hillingdon	39	14	36	61	26	43
Hounslow	39	15	38	81	36	44
Islington	30	16	53	32	14	44
Kensington and Chelsea	45	15	33	59	23	39

	October 1983 to September 1984			October 1984 to September 1985		
	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed	Appeals decided	Appeals allowed	Per cent. allowed
Kingston upon Thames	50	27	54	66	32	48
Lambeth	19	8	42	27	16	59
Lewisham	8	4	50	16	6	38
Merton	19	6	32	35	12	34
Newham	12	5	42	36	18	50
Redbridge	75	32	43	69	37	54
Richmond upon Thames	46	15	33	59	23	39
Southwark	31	15	48	37	23	62
Sutton	31	14	45	40	21	52
Tower Hamlets	9	3	33	15	10	67
Waltham Forest	23	10	43	26	7	27
Wandsworth	13	6	46	45	19	42
City of Westminster	64	28	44	83	35	42
Dartmoor National Park	34	9	26	35	8	23
Exmoor National Park	8	3	38	4	3	75
Lake District National Park	35	10	29	60	22	37
Northumberland National Park	1	1	100	2	0	0
North Yorks Moors National Park	27	8	30	24	3	13
Peak National Park	28	8	29	28	8	29
Yorkshire Dales National Park	22	6	27	29	8	28
London Docklands Development Corporation	2	0	0	3	0	0
Merseyside Development Corporation	0	0	—	0	0	—
ENGLAND TOTAL*	11,391	3,707	33	14,032	5,005	36

* Estimates revised slightly from previously published figures.

Walker House

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations are preventing him from agreeing to the wish of Newcastle city council to demolish Walker house in Walker.

Sir George Young: The demolition by a local authority of its own housing does not need my right hon. Friend's permission, but a special determination is necessary before housing subsidy can continue to be paid in relation to such housing. One relevant factor in considering applications for such determinations is whether the local authority's intention to demolish takes full account of the possibilities for sale to the private sector. If Newcastle upon Tyne city council submit a formal application for a special determination for Walker House, it will be considered on its merits.

Council House Sales (Wandsworth)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the number of council houses or flats sold in each of the last five years in the London borough of Wandsworth and the number of new council properties built there in each of the last five years.

Sir George Young: The numbers of sales of council dwellings reported by Wandsworth for the financial years 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83 appear in issues 62, 63 and 67 respectively of "Local Housing Statistics" and for 1983-84 and 1984-85 in issue 75: copies are available in the Library.

Wandsworth reported the following numbers of council dwellings completed in those financial years:

	Numbers
1980-81	507
1981-82	375
1982-83	316
1983-84	391
1984-85	117

In addition, 53 dwellings were completed for the GLC within Wandsworth during 1980-81 and 86 during 1981-82.

Communal Heating

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has concluded his consultations with the local authority associations and other interested bodies concerning his proposals to make regulations giving secure tenants who are supplied heat from a communal system a right to information about the costs of their heating; and when he now proposes to bring such regulations into effect.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have not yet consulted local authorities and other interested bodies but hope to do so soon. It is therefore too early to say when the regulations will come into effect.

Child Sex Abuse Unit

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to confirm the grant of £323,000 made by the Greater Manchester council to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children for a specialist child sex abuse unit.

Mr. Tracey: The Council's application is being considered carefully.

Housing Co-operative Developments

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce

extended grants for housing co-operative developments to allow preliminary work to be done under section 121 of the Housing Act 1980.

Mr. John Patten: Under section 121 of the Housing Act 1980 the Housing Corporation makes grants to registered housing associations and other voluntary agencies for the purposes of encouraging, and advising on, the formation of new associations and providing services for, and advice to, existing associations. I consider that the present arrangements are satisfactory: the total provision for such grants in 1985-86 is £342,700 of which £94,700 has been set aside for co-operatives; decisions for 1986-87 have still to be taken. In addition to grants under section 121, Co-operatives can benefit from the co-operative promotion allowance which meets the extra costs incurred by co-operatives in seeking professional advice on specific development projects. It has recently been decided that this allowance, first introduced in 1984 for an initial period of one year, should be continued.

Industrial Land

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total area of industrial land which is now unused or redundant in the Yorkshire and Humberside region and in the county of South Yorkshire.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not available and could not readily be produced at an economic cost within a reasonable time-scale.

New Homes

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new homes were completed during 1979 and 1984 in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Sir George Young: The number of housing completions is published in "Local Housing Statistics", copies of which have been placed in the Library. The number of new dwellings completed during 1979 and 1984 in Yorkshire and Humberside is as follows:

	Number
1979	20,567
1984	13,879

Water Authorities

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision is contained in the guidelines issued by him under section 7 of the Water Act 1983 as to what further recourse is available in cases where representations made to water authorities by consumer consultative committees on behalf of complainants are not resolved to the satisfaction of both parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The guidelines advised that where a complaint of maladministration causing injustice had not been satisfactorily resolved, a complainant should be reminded of the ultimate right to complain to the local ombudsman.

The guidelines do not affect a complainant's statutory rights of appeal or his right to seek redress through the Courts in appropriate cases.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will outline his Department's current preferred method of disposal or storage of high level radioactive waste; and what basic requirements the method would entail;

(2) if he will publish a list of sites presently under consideration for the storage or disposal of high level radioactive waste.

Mrs. Rumbold: Present policy is to store for at least 50 years, initially in liquid and then in vitrified form. This will secure a significant reduction in radiation and heat generation, which will make ultimate disposal easier and allows work to continue on establishing the best method of disposal.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Cunliffe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached any conclusions on the performance of his duty under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1985 with regard to waste regulation and disposal in the metropolitan counties and Greater London.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) on Thursday 21 November at column *255*.

Public Sector Housing

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *59-60*, he will list the organisations to which he sent his letter of 17 July.

Mr. John Patten: The letter of 17 July regarding "Disposal of Public Sector Housing for Renovation: Proposals for legislation" was sent to the following bodies:

Association of County Councils
Associations of District Councils
Association of London Authorities
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Greater London Council
Housing Corporation
London Boroughs' Association
National Federation of Housing Associations
New Towns Association
Institute of Housing
National Consumer Council
SHAC
Shelter

In addition, copies were later sent on request to the following bodies:

Community Rights Project Limited
Coventry Trades Council Housing Sub-Committee
Elmbridge Federation of Tenants' Associations
Local Government Information Unit
London Tenants Organisation
Southwark Law Project
Sunderland Borough Council
Tower Hamlets Federation of Tenants' Associations
Wandsworth Tenants' Association
Waterlow Estate Tenants' Association
Welsh Counties Committee
Wimbledon Park Estate Tenants' Association

Housing Co-operatives

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the tenant management housing co-operatives referred to in the Prime Minister's answer of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *2*; how much money is involved; and when he expects to announce the outcome of the review of earlier decisions.

Mr. John Patten: Applications for grant under section 93 of the Finance Act 1965 have been received from three tenant management co-operatives which are registered housing associations and are operating under approved agreements with local authorities.

Ewart Road Housing Co-operative Ltd. applied for grant of £4,456 in respect of the financial year 1982-83. That application was correctly rejected because the co-operative was not a registered housing association throughout the period covered by the claim, but the co-operative was incorrectly told in correspondence that its management activities would have made it ineligible for grant in any event. My Department has now written to the

co-operative's chartered accountants to clarify the position and invite them to consider applying for grant in respect of later years.

Islington Green Tenants Co-operative Ltd. applied for grant of £654 in respect of the financial years 1981-82 and 1982-83. These applications were rejected since the co-operative did not become a registered housing association until 26 April 1982. Subsequent applications for grants totalling £838 have been accepted.

Wellington Mills Housing Co-operative Ltd. applied for grant of £6,222 in respect of the financial year 1982-83. That application was rejected since the co-operative did not become a registered housing association until 26 April 1982. Subsequent applications, for £1,509 in respect of 1983-84 and £2,373 in respect of 1984-85, were rejected because it was not appreciated that the co-operative's tax liability arose from its operation of an agreement approved by the Secretary of State. My Department has written to the co-operative and the 1983-84 and 1984-85 applications will be settled shortly.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what contingency plans he has for action in the event of Liverpool city council becoming unable to meet its financial obligations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I understand that the city council is now considering urgent steps to put its finances in order.

Road Works (London)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he intends to give his decision on the consent to the cleaning and repainting of the Highgate Archway bridge, for which the Greater London council applied on 29 August;

(2) when he intends to give his consent to the widening of the southbound approach to the Kent Gate Way/Gravel Hill/Selsdon Park roundabout junction in Croydon, for which the Greater London council applied on 24 September;

(3) when he intends to give his decision on the consent to the cleaning and repainting of Lambeth bridge, for which the Greater London council applied on 13 August.

Mr. Tracey: Consent has already been given to these applications.

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to be able to report the outcome of the current consultations between his officials and officers of the local authority associations on alternatives to the present system for controlling local authority capital spending.

Mr. Waldegrave: I hope to publish proposals early in the new year.

Local Authority Expenditure

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer of 20 November, *Official Report*, column *246*, he will express the figures contained or implied in that answer, relating to *(a)* estimated local authority capital receipts and *(b)* net capital expenditure allocations on housing for 1986-87, using the same price base as that employed in drawing up the figures for his statement of 18 December 1984 for the same subject.

Mr. John Patten: The information is as follows.

Local authority housing capital receipts are forecast to be £1,435 million in 1986-87. The details are as follows:

	£ million cash
Receipts from sale of land	100
Initial receipts from council house sales	780
Discount repayments	20
Repayment of sums left outstanding on sales	375
Repayments of loans to private persons	130
Repayments of loans to housing associations	30
	1,435

The assumptions about council house sales on which these forecasts are based are:

	Assumption
Number of completed sales	75,000
Average selling price net of discount	£13,900
Average level of discount	45 per cent.
Average level of private finance	75 per cent.

The housing investment programme allocations total for 1986-87 is £1,465 million. These figures, like all figures of receipts and allocations, are expressed in cash.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fraud

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, by year since 1979, how many cases of alleged major fraud were reported in the United Kingdom; and how many, by year, were prosecuted.

Mr. Mellor: It is not possible to separate major frauds as the available statistics are not analysed according to the amount involved in the fraud. Numbers of offences of fraud recorded in England and Wales in each year from 1974 to 1984 are published in table 2.14 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1984" (Cmnd. 9621). For those offences dealt with by the courts, the sentence imposed reflects the seriousness of the offence. The number of persons prosecuted for fraud, and the sentences imposed on those found guilty, are published annually in tables S1.1(A), S2.1(A) and S2.4 of "Criminal Statistics 1984", Supplementary Volumes 1 and 2.

Prison Populations

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the average population of Liverpool prison in the week ended 2 November, or any other recent typical week;

(2) what was the average population of Manchester prison in the week ended 2 November, or any other recent typical week.

Mr. Mellor: On 31 October 1985 the population of Liverpool prison was about 1,290 and of Manchester remand centre and prison about 1,650. Average weekly populations are not collected centrally.

Liverpool Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baths, showers and toilets are available to prisoners in Liverpool prison; how many baths or showers each prisoner is allowed per week; and how many changes of clothes each prisoner is allowed per week.

Mr. Mellor: Liverpool prison currently has available to inmates a total of 18 baths, 66 showers, 131 WCs and 136 urinals. Each prisoner is normally allowed one bath or shower per week and an additional shower when they make use of the gymnasium. In addition, prisoners employed on jobs that are of a physically dirty nature have a shower each day.

Prisoners at Liverpool have one change of clothes per week consisting of one shirt, one pair of socks, one pair of underpants and one vest. Overclothing is changed as necessary. In addition, one towel, one sheet and one pillow-case are changed weekly.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space are available to prisoners in Liverpool prison.

Mr. Mellor: Forty thousand, eight hundred and eighty eight sq ft in exercise yards, 109,620 sq ft in the grassed area, and 8,964 sq ft in the gymnasia.

Manchester Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many baths, showers and toilets are available to prisoners in Manchester prison; how many baths or showers each prisoner is allowed per week; and how many changes of clothes each prisoner is allowed per week.

Mr. Mellor: Manchester prison currently has available to inmates a total of nine baths, 72 showers, 130 WCs and 105 urinals. Each prisoner is normally allowed one bath or shower per week, and those who are employed on jobs that are of a physically dirty nature have a shower each day, as do prisoners returning from court appearances.

Prisoners at Manchester have one change of clothes per week, consisting of two shirts, two pairs of socks, two pairs of underpants and two vests. Overclothing is changed as necessary, but on return from court, prisoners receive a full kit of clean clothes. In addition, one towel, one sheet and one pillow-case are changed weekly and a full set of bedding is available to prisoners on return from court.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space are available to prisoners in Manchester prison.

Mr. Mellor: Fifty thousand, two hundred and ninety five sq ft in exercise yards, 60,534 sq ft in hard surface games areas, and 14,957 sq ft in the gymnasia.

Police (Helicopters and Light Aircraft)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many helicopters the Metropolitan police currently possess; what orders are currently outstanding; what further orders are planned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the Metropolitan police own three helicopters and that there are no orders outstanding or planned.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Optica light aircraft are currently on order by the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the Metropolitan police have not ordered any Optica aircraft.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for reports from each chief constable as to the number of Optica light aircraft which are on order for each force in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Race Relations

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to amend the Race Relations Acts so that a requirement to speak Welsh for certain jobs in Wales is outwith the scope of racial discrimination.

Mr. Waddington: I am not persuaded that any such amendment is necessary.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has issued any guidelines for the procedure to be followed by the Commission for Racial Equality for the selection of commissioners who have special responsibilities.

Mr. Waddington: No. As I explained in the reply given to a question from the hon. Member on 11 November at columns *35-36*, the allocation of particular responsibilities to individual commissioners is entirely a matter for the commission.

Data Protection Act (Telephone Numbers)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from British Telecom about the effect of the Data Protection Act on those who control the telephone numbers stored under press-buttons attached to certain telephones which are used for business purposes.

Mr. Waddington: None.

Parkhurst Prison

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total estimated cost of converting C wing at Parkhurst prison into a therapeutic unit.

Mr. Mellor: The conversion work currently being undertaken in C wing will provide both a therapeutic unit and a rule 43 unit. A contract for the overall scheme has been let in the sum of £254,000.

Fruit Machines (Public Houses)

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to increase to £20 the maximum prize permitted on fruit machines installed in public houses.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no present plans to do so.

Deportation

Mr. Grist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons served with deportation orders in each of the last five years have disappeared prior to deportation being effected.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that the information is not readily available.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought in respect of defects in the roadworthiness of heavy goods vehicles during each of the past five years for which figures are available; how many have succeeded; and what has been the average fine imposed.

Mr. Mellor: No reliable information is available for specific types of vehicle. The available information is for all types of vehicle and relates to proceedings and findings of guilt at magistrates' courts for offences where a vehicle or part was in dangerous or defective condition, and is published annually in "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (offence group 14 of table 1). Information on the average fines imposed for these offences is shown in tables 6 and 12 of the latest issues.

Jashim Uddin

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why Jashim Uddin, a Bangladeshi who came for a visit on 13 October has been kept in detention for five weeks.

Mr. Waddington: Jashim Uddin was refused leave to enter the United Kingdom on 13 October and, having no right of appeal against that decision in this country, would have been returned to Bangladesh very quickly had the hon. Member not made representations against refusal. He was detained pending receipt and consideration of hon. Member's representations because the immigration service inspector who reviewed the case agreed with the chief immigration officer that it was not a proper case in which to grant temporary admission. I replied to the hon. Member's representations on 21 November.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been taken in 1983, 1984 and 1985, to the most recent date for which figures are available, for offences involving the misuse of poisonous baits or stupefying substances contrary to sections 5 and 11 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me, which may be incomplete is shown in the table below. It is not possible, without disproportionate cost, to distinguish those offences relating to the use of poisonous baits or stupefying substances. Information for 1985 is not yet available.

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts in England and Wales for offences under section 5 or 11 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Number of defendants

Year	*Proceedings taken under Section 5*	*Section 11*
1983	12	—
1984	19	5

Parole

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement outlining the current guidelines issued to parole boards considering the release of those convicted of violent crimes.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) on 21 November at column *274*.

Scarman Report (Recommendations)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received about the application of the Scarman recommendations following the Brixton riots; what have been the nature of the representations; if he will consider a review of the recommendations and their application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: During public discussion of the recent riots a number of references have been made to Lord Scarman's report in this House and elsewhere. The day after the Handsworth riot my right hon. Friend re-read the report and commissioned a study about how far it had been implemented. He has since placed a paper in the Library which shows that both the police and the Government have responded positively and vigorously to the report.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the applicants queuing for entry clearance for settlement at each post in the Indian sub-continent are children.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is given in the following table:

Children awaiting a decision on their application for entry clearance for settlement in the United Kingdom at the end of June 1985
Indian sub-continent

Post	*Number of children*	*Children as percentage of all applicants* for settlement awaiting a decision*
Dhaka	8,700	70
New Delhi	200	15
Bombay	220	18
Calcutta	10	19
Islamabad	3,400	50
Karachi	40	17
Total Indian sub-continent	12,500	57

* Wives, children, other dependent relatives and others for immediate settlement, and husbands and male fiances.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in 1984 how many women in the Indian subcontinent were granted entry clearance to join husbands in the United Kingdom in families where another wife had already been granted entry clearance.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available centrally.

Plastic Bullets

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to allow chief constables to use plastic bullets without his prior notification or approval, and if he will make a statement; (2) if he will list in the *Official Report* the chief constables who have applied for permission to use plastic bullets.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government made plastic baton rounds available to police forces in Great Britain following the riots in 1981. In reply to a question by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 19 November at columns 140-41, I listed those forces in England and Wales understood to hold baton rounds.

As was made clear by the then Home Secretary on 19 October 1981 at columns 29-30, plastic baton rounds are to be used only as a last resort where conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of the circumstances obtaining be unlikely to succeed if tried, and where the chief officer judges such action to be necessary because of the risk of loss of life or serious injury or widespread destruction of property. They may be used only with the express authority of the chief officer of police (or, in his absence, his deputy). This is an operational matter for the chief officer of police, and my right hon. Friend's prior notification or approval is not required.

PRIME MINISTER

President Reagan

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with President Reagan.

The Prime Minister: President Reagan and General-Secretary Gorbachev met in Geneva on 19-21 November. A copy of the joint statement issued by the two leaders on 21 November has been placed in the Library of the House. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and I attended a briefing by President Reagan for the Alliance in Brussels also on 21 November. The President received the full support of the Alliance for the achievements of the meeting.

The Geneva meeting was a success. It has helped to establish a measure of confidence and greater understanding between the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, given an impetus to the arms control negotiations in Geneva, and made clear that existing arms control agreements will continue to be honoured on a reciprocal basis.

There were a number of specific results: the institution of regular summit meetings, the commitment to make progress on a wide range of arms control issues including chemical weapons, the institution of regular exchanges on regional issues, steps to improve contacts and exchanges and other agreed measures set out in the joint statement.

As President Reagan himself said, the results of the summit will be judged over the months and years ahead by deeds not words. Fundamental differences remain both on matters of ideology, on some of the most difficult arms control issues, on regional problems and on human rights. But there is now a clear framework and timetable for discussion of these differences. The outcome of the summit justifies greater hope for their resolution and for peace and stability.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme

Mr. Lawler asked the Paymaster General what is the percentage of participants in the community programme which are from ethnic minorities both nationally and in west Yorkshire, and the percentage of long-term unemployed from ethnic minorities.

Mr. Alan Clark: The latest sample survey (autumn) 1984 of community programme participants estimate that 9 per cent. were from ethnic minority groups. Reliable results are not available below national level. The 1984 labour force survey indicated that of those people without jobs, and seeking work for one year or more, 9 per cent. were of non-white ethnic origins.

Radiation

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what is his Department's estimate of the number of workers exposed to some level of radiation in Britain at the latest available date; and how many of them are required to be monitored for radiation exposure.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Background radiation exists. The best estimate is that there are 364,000 workers occupationally exposed to ionising radiations above normal background levels.

About 135,000 people have their radiation exposure monitored either voluntarily or by law.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General whether he will now take steps to reduce the maximum permissible dose of radiation a worker is allowed to be given from 5 rems to 0·5 rems a year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 were subjected to long and wide-ranging consultation by the Health and Safety Commission.

Job Creation

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Paymaster General how many additional jobs have been created in the United Kingdom economy in the last 12 months.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of the numbers of jobs created are not available. Net changes in the number of jobs may be calculated by comparing estimates of employment levels for different dates. The net increases in the employed labour force (which includes employees

in employment, the self employed and members of Her Majesty's Forces) in the United Kingdom between June 1984 and June 1985 was 255,000.

Self-employed Persons

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Paymaster General what has been the trend in self-employment since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: Since June 1979, the numbers of self-employed people in Great Britain are estimated to have changed as shown in the following table:

June of each year	*Self-employed (with or without employees)*	*Change since preceding year*
1979	1,842,000	−1,000
1980	1,950,000	108,000
1981	2,057,000	107,000
1982	2,109,000	52,000
1983	2,160,000	51,000
1984	2,433,000	273,000
1985	2,559,000	126,000

The estimate for 1985 is provisional.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General what percentage of youth training scheme leavers in *(a)* Coventry and *(b)* the west midlands, who left the scheme in each of the months from June 1984 to June 1985, were in (i) full-time employment and (ii) part-time employment three months later.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available in the form requested. The Manpower Services Commission's regular surveys of young people leaving youth training scheme programmes do, however, show that of leavers between 1 June 1984 and 31 March 1985, 54 per cent. in the Coventry area of the commission's training division, and 55 per cent. in the commission's Midlands region, were in full-time work at the time of the survey.

Figures for leavers since 1 April 1985 are available on a more comprehensive basis. These show that, of leavers between 1 April 1985 and 31 May 1985, 50 per cent. were in full-time work and 5 per cent. in part-time work in the Coventry local authority district at the time of the survey. In the county of West Midlands, 53 per cent. were in full-time work and 4 per cent. in part-time work.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the standard of employment status and protection afforded to those on youth training scheme schemes.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will give the numbers of those who have been unemployed for 12 months and more in May 1979 and the percentage increase since then; and what estimate he has of the number of people currently out of work who are not claiming benefit;

(2) if he will give the numbers of those who had been unemployed for 12 months or more in May 1979 within *(a)* the west midlands region and *(b)* the black country area; what is the percentage increase since then; and what estimates he has of the number of people currently out of work who are not claiming benefit in each of these areas.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the numbers of registrants in the United Kingdom and the west midlands who had been unemployed for over 12 months in April 1979 (not available for May).

Comparisons of unemployment over the period specified are difficult to make because of the change in the basis of the count in October 1982, the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer need to sign on at unemployment benefit offices to receive benefit, and, for local areas, the change to a ward-based system for allocating claimants to localities. The table also shows the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom, the west midlands and the black country as at 10 October 1985.

Unemployed over 12 months

	Number
Unemployed registrants—April 1979	
United Kingdom	366,711
West midlands	34,154
Unemployed claimants—October 1985	
United Kingdom	1,351,857
West midlands	164,848
Black country*	50,266

* Figures relate to the Dudley and Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Walsall travel-to-work areas, as defined in 1984.

According to the labour force survey in Great Britain in the spring of 1984, there were about 870,000 people without jobs seeking work but not claiming unemployment benefits. There were about 90,000 in the west midlands. The sample size of the survey is insufficient to provide those figures for the black country.

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the registered number of vacancies by standard industrial classification in the Coventry area at the latest available date and at May 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. Table 1 shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres which cover an area closely corresponding to the Coventry and Hinckley travel-to-work area as at May 1979 according to the 1968 standard industrial classification. Table 2 shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies, excluding self-employed vacancies at jobcentres which cover the same area at 2 August 1985, the latest date for which an analysis according to the 1980 standard industrial classification is available.

Table 1—Unfilled vacancies—Jobcentres in the Coventry and Hinckley travel-to-work area May 1979

Standard Industrial Classification 1968	*Unfilled Vacancies*
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	11
Mining and quarrying	5
Food, drink and tobacco	11
Coal and petroleum products	9
Chemicals and allied industries	5
Metal manufacture	62
Mechanical engineering	271
Instrument engineering	3

Standard Industrial Classification 1968	Unfilled Vacancies
Electrical engineering	108
Shipbuilding and marine engineering	5
Vehicles	230
Metal goods not elsewhere specified	104
Textiles	76
Leather, leather goods and fur	2
Clothing and footwear	66
Bricks, pottery, glass and cement	15
Timber and furniture, etc	20
Paper, printing and publishing	16
Other manufacturing	23
Construction	154
Gas, electricity and water	54
Transport and communication	86
Distributive trades	262
Insurance and banking etc	85
Professional and scientific services	100
Miscellaneous services	277
Public administration and defence	155
Total	2,215

Table 2—Unfilled vacancies—Jobcentres in the Coventry and Hinckley travel-to-work area August 1985

Standard Industrial Classification 1980	Unfilled Vacancies
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	4
Energy and water supply industries	9
Extraction and manufacture of minerals and metals	30
Metal goods and vehicle industries, etc	280
Other manufacturing industries	133
Construction	118
Distribution, hotels and catering; repairs	354
Transport and communication	50
Banking, finance, insurance and leasing, etc	133
Other services	266
Total	1,377

Misleading Advertisements

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General if he will introduce legislation to strengthen the legal provisions governing misleading advertisements offering employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Regulations govern the conduct of employment agencies and employment businesses cover advertisements for jobs. Agents must make clear in their advertisements that they are employment agents. If they offer an information service about jobs and have no authority from employers to find workers for such jobs, they must state this in the advertisement. Employment businesses must state rates of pay, the minimum qualifications required to earn them, the nature of the job and its location. They must also state when workers are to be supplied on a self-employed basis only. There are no plans to strengthen or alter this legislation.

Visual Display Units

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what studies have been made to assess the possible effects of visual display units on their operators.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985]: Many studies have been undertaken over the last ten years. They have mainly looked at possible effects on vision, musculo skeletal problems, skin and alleged reproductive problems. "Health effects of VDUs: a bibliography by Rosemary Thomas" has been published by the Health and Safety Executive. I have placed a copy in the Library.

More recent published studies include "Work and pregnancy in Montreal—preliminary findings on work with visual display terminals", "Birth defects and video display terminals" and "Video display work and pregnancy—research in the Nordic countries". I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Library.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Textbooks

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of schools in each local authority in which children are sharing textbooks and as to what proportion of all school children this represents.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect information in this form. Her Majesty's Inspectors judged, in their report on the effects of local expenditure policies on education provision in England, 1984, itself based on information collected in the autumn term of 1984, that in primary schools the level of book provision was satisfactory or better in over four-fifths of local education authorities, and that for the 11-16 and 16-19 age groups the provision was satisfactory or better in nearly two-thirds and just over three-quarters of LEAs respectively. HMI noted in the report that for all age groups book provision in 1984-85 was better than it has been in 1983-84.

Youth Service

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has so far received in response to circular 1/85 on the youth service.

Mr. Dunn: Circular 1/85 on the youth service requested responses from local authorities by 31 December 1985. So far nine responses have been received and some voluntary and other organisations have submitted general views on the issues raised in the circular.

Geophysics

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on research into geophysics in the light of the report of a Royal Society working party on "The Support of Geophysics in the United Kingdom", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend awaits the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on this matter.

School Meals

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his latest estimate of the numbers and percentage of local education authorities which provide free school meals to families above the entitlement levels for family income supplement; and how many families are affected.

Mr. Dunn: In October 1984, 65 authorities, that is 68 per cent. of the local education authorities in England,

granted free meals above the level of entitlement for family income supplement and supplementary benefit. Information on the number of families is not available. The report of the school meals census for autumn 1984 "Provision of School Meals, England October 1984" is available in the Library.

Institute of Psychiatry

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give for each year since 1979 the total income and expenditure of the Institute of Psychiatry breaking down the figures by source of income and item of expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the institute's deficit of £250,000.

Mr. Walden: Details of the income and expenditure of the Institute of Psychiatry are given in its accounts. Copies of the accounts for 1980 to 1984 have been placed in the Library. The accounts for the year to 31 July 1985 are still being audited but I understand that arrangements are in hand to fund the deficit.

Disabled Students

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what advice his Department has given to education authorities on the provision of interpreters for deaf students in primary and secondary schools, further education colleges and adult education institutes.

Mr. Dunn: The Department has given no advice to local education authorities on this matter. The provision of interpreters for deaf students in primary and secondary schools, colleges of further education and adult education institutes is a matter for individual authorities to decide upon.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many children have moved into mainstream schools from special schools for *(a)* deaf children, *(b)* blind children, *(c)* physically handicapped children, *(d)* children with mild learning difficulties and *(e)* children with severe learning difficulties in each of the years since 1981.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected.

Medical Research Council

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will list those establishments which currently receive funding through the Medical Research Council for investigations of the treatment of trauma caused by accident or injury; and, in the case of each establishment, what is the broad nature of the research being undertaken;

(2) what level of funding is currently available through the Medical Research Council for investigations of the treatment of trauma caused by accident or injury for each establishment that is currently in receipt of such funding.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Medical Research Council is funding 38 projects on research into trauma, including projects which could prove relevant to an understanding of trauma. The projects span work carried out at MRC's own establishments and through grant support to universities. In the financial year 1984-85 the council's expenditure on this research amounted to £1·2 million. I will write to my hon. Friend with further details.

Details of the council's activities are listed in the Medical Research Council Handbook for 1984-85, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether funding through the Medical Research Council of the trauma unit at the University of Manchester is to be continued.

Mr. Walden: It is for the Medical Research Council to decide how to apportion the grant-in-aid it receives from the Department's science budget between the various areas of science which it supports under the provisions of its charter. I understand that the council has not yet reached a decision about the future of its trauma unit.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many people are currently employed in Medical Research Council units in England and Wales, and how many of these employees are in the north-west region;

(2) if he will state the total number of Medical Research Council units in England and Wales; and how many of these units are located in the north-west region.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Medical Research Council has 48 units in England and Wales which employ 2,812 people. Of these, two units employing 36 people are located in the north-west region.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will review the operation of the Medical Research Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: No. The Advisory Board for the Research Councils advises my right hon. Friend on a continuing basis on the operation of all the research councils, including the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy concerning the geographic location of Medical Research Council units.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will examine and report on the geographical distribution of grants by the Medical Research Council.

Mr. Walden: The geographical location of the work which the Medical Research Council funds is a matter for the scientific judgment of the council.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received on the distribution, nature and purposes of grants by the Medical Research Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Since 1 January 1985 the Department has received 23 representations from hon. Members and other interested parties about the distribution, nature and purposes of grants funded by the Medical Research Council.

Schools of Architecture (Closures)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science on what criteria the proposed closures of schools of architecture in Belfast, north-east London and Huddersfield polytechnics are based.

Mr. Walden: The recommendations to the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education (NAB) and to the University Grants Committee (UGC) that the schools of architecture at Huddersfield and North East London polytechnics and Queen's university Belfast cease intakes to part 1 courses in 1986 and to part 2 courses as soon as possible thereafter and no later than 1989, and the criteria on which these recommendations are based, are contained within the architecture intakes working party report (August 1985), a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Spina Bifida

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he has received the report of the Medical Research Council on the efficacy of multi-vitamin treatments in the prevention of spina bifida;

(2) whether he now has sufficient evidence to determine if the addition of multivitamin supplements in early pregnancy can affect the development of spina bifida in children.

Mr. Walden: No. The relevant trial, which the Medical Research Council is conducting, started in the summer of 1983. I understand that the council expects that up to five years may be needed, from the time the trial started, before results are obtained.

Students (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the policy of his Department in respect of the financial support of students during vacations.

Mr. Walden: The maintenance grant provides for the financial support of students during the Christmas and Easter vacations. No provision is made for the summer vacation.

Deaf Teachers

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make an announcement on the replacement for circular 11/78 in respect of the medical regulations affecting deaf teachers; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: Following consultation on a replacement to circular 11/78 the Department invited comments by 31 October 1985 on revised paragraphs dealing with defective eyesight and hearing in relation to initial teacher training. Urgent consideration is being given to the comments received.

Universities

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what he expects to be the additional cost to universities' national insurance contributions in the forthcoming academic year as a result of the 1985 budget.

Mr. Walden: It is estimated that the net additional cost to the universities of employers' national insurance contributions will be between £7 million and £8 million for the 1986-87 academic year, which is the first full academic year to which the new contribution rates will apply.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information is available to his Department in respect of the length of time taken to fill fixed-term appointments in universities; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has as to the number of university posts without tenure which remain unfilled for *(a)* one month, *(b)* three months and *(c)* more than six months after the first notification of the vacancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: This information is not collected centrally.

Academic Clinical Staff

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the cost of implementing the 1985 salary increase awarded to National Health Service staff to university clinical staff.

Mr. Walden: The estimated cost of implementing the 1985 salary increase awarded to NHS staff to university clinical academic staff is about £4 million in a full year. This includes the cost of employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions.

Academic Clinical Staff

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education if she will publish a table in the *Official Report* setting out the salaries of clinical academic staff and National Health Service staff at comparable levels of seniority and specialism for each of the last three years.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows.

	Salary scales for clinical academic staff				*NHS equivalent*
	1 April 1982 (£)	*1 April 1983* (£)	*1 April 1984* (£)	*1 November 1984* (£)	
Lecturers (Not holding honourary contracts)	8,730	9,260	9,770	10,130	]
	9,170	9,730	10,270	10,640	]
	9,610	10,200	10,760	11,150	} Registrars Scale
	10,050	10,670	11,260	11,660	]
	10,570	11,220	11,850	12,270	]
	11,100	11,780	12,430	12,880	]
	11,620	12,330	13,020	13,490	[Top 4 points of Senior
	12,150	12,890	13,610	14,100	[Registrars scale
	12,670	13,440	14,190	14,710	]

	Salary scales for clinical academic staff				NHS equivalent
	1 April 1982 (£)	1 April 1983 (£)	1 April 1984 (£)	1 November 1984 (£)	
	13,980	14,840	15,670	16,240	4th and 5th points of Associate Specialists Scale
	15,110	16,040	16,930	17,560	
Senior Lecturers Readers (not holding honorary contracts)	13,980	14,840	15,670	16,240	
	15,110	16,040	16,930	17,560	
	16,020	17,010	17,960	18,640	Interpolation of 2nd and 6th points of this 2nd point of scale consultants scale +4·4 per cent.
	17,200	18,260	19,280	20,020	
	18,360	19,490	20,580	21,370	
	19,410	20,610	21,770	22,620	
Lecturers Senior Lecturers and Readers (holding honorary contracts)	17,370	18,440	19,470	20,200	Consultants scale
	18,590	19,740	20,850	21,670	
	19,820	21,050	22,230	23,140	
	21,050	22,360	23,610	24,610	
	22,270	23,660	24,990	26,080	
Professors maximum	22,270	23,660	24,990	26,080	Maximum of consultants scale

Salaries scales of clinical staff at universities are derived from NHS scales as shown in the table and parity has been maintained until 1984-85. NHS doctors and dentists have received pay increases averaging 6·3 per cent. from 1 June which would add 5·3 per cent. to the pay bill for the year ending 31 March 1986. The university employers have said that they are unable to apply that increase to clinical academic staff without compensation for the costs in excess of whatever settlement might be agreed for non-clinical academic staff. In the meantime a "without prejudice" interim payment of 4 per cent. has been made with effect from 1 June.

Higher Education

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the proportion of pupils with only one A-level entering higher education in 1985-86 compared with 1979-80.

Mr. Walden: The proportions of English school leavers in 1978-79 and 1983-84 (the latest year for which information is available) who obtained one A-level pass and who intended directly to pursue a full-time degree or equivalent teacher training course were 5·2 per cent and 1·4 per cent. respectively.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Information Technology Centres

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards financial self-sufficiency for information technology centres.

Mr. Pattie: The funding provided by my Department to information technology centres is intended to be used in part to create revenue generating activities. I am pleased to announce that in addition to this support my Department, in conjunction with the Manpower Services Commission, is currently setting up a national marketing organisation which it is considered will be of great help to centres in moving towards self-sufficiency. This facility should be available for the use of all ITeCs early in the new year.

Imports (Soviet Union)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give a breakdown of the products which have been imported into the United Kingdom from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during the last six years and the extent to which these imports rose or decreased from year to year during the same period; and if he will list the trade balance between the two countries from year to year during the same period.

Mr. Channon: Information relating to the crude balance, and imports under six of the main product groups is given in the table. A fuller breakdown of imports by SITC/R2 division may be obtained from table II of the relevant issue of "UK Overseas Trade Statistics".

£ million

Crude Trade Balance	1979 −75		1980 +28		1981 −18		1982 −289		1983 −284		1984 −121	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Hides, skins and furskins (21)	22	+19	22	0	27	+20	23	−15	30	+32	35	+18
Cork and Wood (24)	103	+7	106	+3	72	−32	84	+17	105	+25	119	+13
Textile fibres (26)	19	+19	11	−42	11	−2	11	−3	4	−65	2	−59
Petroleum and petroleum products (33)	238	−10	180	−24	226	+25	422	+87	456	+8	562	+23
Cork and wood manufactures (63)	12	+16	11	−7	7	−34	11	+55	12	+6	15	+23

	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
Crude Trade Balance	−75		+28		−18		−289		−284		−121	
	(a)	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*	*(a)*	*(b)*
Road vehicles (78)	29	+46	16	−46	18	+17	24	+31	28	+16	17	−40
Other	69	—	76	—	66	—	71	—	95	—	105	—

(a) United Kingdom imports £ million (cif).
(b) Percentage change from previous year.

Source: Table II of "Overseas Trade Statistics".
Notes:
(i) crude trade balance is calculated as United Kingdom exports (fob) less imports (cif).
(ii) figures in parenthesis after commodity descriptions refer to divisions of the Standard International Trade Classification (Revision 2).
(iii) owing to rounding percentages may not correspond exactly to values given.

West Midlands County Council (Trade Mission)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advice and assistance his Department gave to the West Midlands county council trade mission to Hong Kong from 19 October to 10 November 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: My Department provided advice to the Birmingham city council and the West Midlands county council on the export promotion aspects of a Birmingham and West Midlands festival held in Hong Kong in October and November 1984. The British Overseas Trade Board provided financial support under its usual conditions to participants in a parallel trade mission organised by the West Midlands regional group of chambers of commerce. It also gave financial and organisational support to a wider British trade promotion sponsored by the Birmingham chamber of commerce and industry.

Private Manufacturing (Investment)

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the average level of investment per employee in the private manufacturing sector in *(a)* the east midlands and *(b)* for England as a whole in 1981 and 1984.

Mr. Butcher: Regional investment data relating to the private sector of manufacturing industry are not readily available and would be costly to compile. Estimates for 1983 and 1984 are not yet available. Available information is given in the following table:

Net capital expenditure per head in manufacturing industry at current prices*

Year	*East Midlands* £	*England* £
1981	804	883
1982	924	985

* Divisions 2-4, Standard Industrial Classification; Revised 1980.
Source: Annual Census of Production Business Monitor PA 1002.

Life Insurance Policies

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, before reaching a final decision as to whether to seek to compel salesmen in the United Kingdom to disclose their commissions when marketing life insurance policies, he will have regard to the practice in the rest of the European Economic Community, the United States of America and the major countries of the Commonwealth; and what such information is presently available to him.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has estimated the probable loss to the Export Credits Guarantee Department of guarantees given in respect of trade with Nigeria since 1981; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The Export Credits Guarantee Department has made substantial claims payments relating to trade with Nigeria since 1981. The majority of the claims results from delays in the transfer of foreign exchange which the Nigerian authorities intend to clear by 1989.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the total cumulative losses under the Export Credits Guarantee Department's comprehensive basic guarantee schemes; and if he will list under each facility the percentage of total claims payments for that facility attributable to the 10 biggest loss-making individual guarantees.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 November 1985, c. *188*]: The information is not available in the precise form requested because final losses do not become known until some years after the guarantees are given. Details of the outturn of ECGD's activities are published annually in the audited trading accounts and provisional figures for 1984-85 are in "ECGD Trading Results 1984-85", copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he or his officials have held any discussions since 1981 with the Nigerian authorities over trade in relation to export credit guarantees or other trade involving alleged fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: United Kingdom policy on export credit support for Nigeria has been regularly discussed in the course of normal bilateral exchanges between trade and other officials. Questions of alleged fraud have not arisen during these meetings.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when he first became aware of possible losses to the Export Credits Guarantee Department arising out of alleged fraudulent trading by customers of Johnson Matthey Bankers and other banks;

(2) when he first became aware of possible irregularities concerning guarantees given by the Export Credits Guarantee Department in relation to trade since 1981 carried on by customers of Johnson Matthey Bankers and other banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Small Insurance Intermediaries

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to maintain opportunities for small insurance intermediaries engaged in general business to expand without unnecessary restrictions in terms of extended registration procedure or the payment of fees to registration bodies.

Mr. Howard: It is not the Government's policy to reduce opportunities by placing unnecessary restrictions upon any kind of business.

Sumrie plc

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to his reply of 19 November to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central in relation to Sumrie plc, when he expects to be in a position to say what action will be taken in relation to the information obtained.

Mr. Howard: As soon as possible.

Tin

Mr. Fletcher asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, in the light of the continuing crisis in the London Metal Exchange and its implications for the financial sector generally and the tin industry in particular, he will make urgent inquiries into the affairs which led to the sudden suspension of the activities of the buffer stock manager and of trading on the Metals Exchange and into the implications for Her Majesty's Government's position as host country to the International Tin Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The Government are naturally concerned to obtain the fullest possible information which will assist in their aim of securing an orderly return to trading in tin. The Government, and as appropriate the Bank of England, are holding talks with the various parties concerned, and the International Tin Council has met the banks and the London Metal Exchange to discuss possible solutions to the crisis.

The International Tin Council is to resume its meeting on 2 December and will remain in session until it reaches a definitive solution to the current crisis. Her Majesty's Government will continue their efforts to persuade other member countries to state their willingness to meet their obligations in order that a satisfactory solution to the crisis may be found.

Scales and Weighing Machines

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Offical Report* the planned timetable for implementation of the Eden working party's recommendations on revised pattern approval procedures and self verification, as outlined to the recent conference of the Federation of Scale and Weighing Machine Manufacturers.

Mr. Howard: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Financial Services Bill

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when Her Majesty's Government expects to introduce the Financial Services Bill.

Mr. Howard: Next month.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals Her Majesty's Government have put forward to the general agreement on tariffs and trade for the forthcoming trade negotiations.

Mr. Channon: The Government have proposed an early launch for the proposed new round of multilateral trade negotiations, with a preparatory committee set up at this week's meeting of the contracting parties to GATT. We shall be negotiating for better access for British exports of goods and services. We want a genuine opening-up of the markets of Japan and the newly-industrialised countries. We want agreed rules for liberalising trade in services, reductions in remaining high tariffs, and more effective GATT dispute — settlement procedures.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* his Department's estimates, for the years 1978 to 1984, for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions, of the numbers of jobs created by (i) regional policy and (ii) other employment assistance measures, and of the costs per job.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985]: The table below shows the number of jobs expected to be created or safeguarded in the assisted areas by projects receiving offers of regional selective assistance in the years 1978-84 by region and country within Great Britain, and the estimated offer value per job. Estimates on a similar basis are not available for other regional policy measures.

The figures in the table are not comparable with estimates of the number and associated cost of providing net additional jobs in the assisted areas. Such estimates are not available on an annual basis or for a recent period.

The numbers of jobs created by regional policy and employment assistance measures in Northern Ireland, and by employment assistance measures in Great Britain, are matters for, respectively, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Paymaster General.

Employment Expected to be Created or Safeguarded and Offer Value per Job (at current prices) Associated with Projects in Receipt of Offers of Section 7 Assistance in the Years 1978-84 by Region and Country

Region Country	1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	No. of jobs	offer value per job (£)	No. of jobs	Offer value per job (£)	No. of jobs	Offer value per job (£)	No. of jobs	Offer value per job (£)	No. of jobs	Offer value per job (£)	No. of jobs	Offer value per job (£)	No. of jobs	Offer value per job (£)
Scotland	15,359	1,388	22,009	1,572	22,255	1,734	15,614	2,837	16,797	2,602	19,854	2,322	21,842	2,774
Wales	12,854	4,279	14,232	1,538	13,739	2,133	10,080	1,796	10,722	2,285	20,038	2,241	18,295	2,870
North East	10,381	1,926	14,461	1,756	14,567	2,183	5,184	2,218	7,089	2,031	11,616	1,911	14,565	3,838
North West	50,078	1,431	31,213	1,471	20,261	1,486	8,681	1,728	8,179	1,736	8,277	1,655	5,788	2,315
Yorkshire Humberside	7,543	778	16,133	849	8,151	883	8,298	1,687	11,089	1,073	9,450	1,693	2,241	2,142
East Midlands	1,521	681	1,500	466	2,267	1,191	2,189	1,873	5,727	2,218	2,812	3,058	3,038	2,930
West Midlands	59	608	31	1,290	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*0	*0
South West	4,299	959	4,323	1,249	1,046	1,816	683	1,757	1,604	3,117	1,607	2,054	2,068	2,950

Notes:
N/A = not applicable.
* Regional selective assistance only became available at the end of the year.

Pirate Radio Stations

Mr. Greg Knight asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total cost to public funds during the last 12 months of the surveillance and other activities carried out against off-shore pirate radio stations.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answers I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) on 19 November at column *129*.

Bankers' Guarantee Scheme

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* a breakdown for each of the last three financial years of the percentages of comprehensive bankers guarantee scheme policyholders with facility values of *(a)* up to £500,000, *(b)* £500,000 to £1 million and *(c)* over £1 million and the percentages of total claims paid under the scheme for each of these categories.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to the reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *250*]: The comprehensive bankers guarantee scheme embraces two facilities—one for open account transactions and one for bills or notes. The breakdown requested of numbers of policies for each facility is:

Per cent.

Limit of facility	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Open account			
Below £500,000	91·0	93·0	91·0
£500,000 to £1 million	5·0	4·0	4·5
Above £1 million	4·0	3·0	4·5
Bills notes			
Below £500,000	84·0	83·0	86·0
£500,000 to £1 million	7·0	9·0	7·0
Above £1 million	9·0	8·0	7·0

A number of policyholders use both facilities. Information about the percentage of total claims relating to each category is not available in the form requested.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Asset Holdings

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will publish in the *Official Report* the shareholdings of the Church Commissioners in excess of £10,000 in any shopping or trading company, detailing the amount held by the Church Commissioners asset committee and the company or trading name, such shareholding relating to United Kingdom based companies only.

Sir William van Straubenzee: As at 31 October 1985 the commissioners held shares in United Kingdom retailing companies as follows:

Company	Shares
Argyll Group	600,000
Associated Dairies Group	1,000,000
Bejam Group	817,916
Boots	875,000
Burton Group	1,522,016
Dee Corporation	2,425,000
Dixons Group	710,000
Great Universal Stores	350,000
Habitat/Mothercare	685,000
Hepworth, J.	1,705,000
Marks & Spencer	6,600,000
Sainsbury, J.	758,000
Samuel, H.	715,500
Sears	5,034,319
Smith, W. H.	300,000
Superdrug	195,000
Tesco	400,000

ENERGY

Alternative Energy Sources

13. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to have discussions with the European Commission about alternative sources of energy.

Mr. David Hunt: I am pleased to say that in recent months the Council of Ministers has agreed substantial new Community programmes on non-nuclear energy

research, development and demonstration. These should be of real benefit to British companies and university groups actively pursuing alternative sources of energy.

21. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the proportion of the total United Kingdom energy needs which can be met by alternative forms of energy in 1985 and in 10 years time.

Mr. David Hunt: The alternative sources contribute less than 1 per cent. to the United Kingdom's total primary energy supply at present. By the end of the century this contribution could rise to 2 per cent.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to hold meetings with representatives of alternative energy interest groups on a regular basis.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department meets with representatives of a wide range of groups with interests in alternative energy sources.

Coal Industry

15. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he intends to meet the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers and the Union of Democratic Mineworkers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I am always willing to meet the leaders of any recognised trade union.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has discussed with the chairman of the National Coal Board the implications for the coal industry of recognition by the National Coal Board of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers.

Mr. Peter Walker: The recognition of trade unions within the coal industry is a matter for the NCB. I am sure that it is desirable that mineworkers should be represented by the union of their choice.

Pensioners (Free Fuel)

16. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will introduce legislation to provide a Christmas allocation of free fuel for retirement pensioners.

Mr. Goodlad: All domestic consumers will have benefited from the falls in the real prices of fuels that have occurred the last two years. The social security system helps the least well-off with day-to-day expenses, including fuel, and extra help is available for those with special needs.

Gas Industry

17. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what provision will be made for employee share ownership upon the privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: All who work in the gas industry will be given positive opportunity to acquire shares.

19. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his proposals for the privatisation of British Gas.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The details of our proposals will be brought before the House shortly.

British Gas Corporation and Electricity Council

20. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the chairman of the British Gas Corporation and the chairman of the Electricity Council.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet the chairmen of each industry.

23. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the British Gas Corporation and the Electricity Council, he will raise with them the future level of gas and electricity prices; and if he will make a statement.

25. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the Electricity Council, he will raise the subject of the industrial price of electricity.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer to the answer which I gave today to the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). Prices are a matter for the industry concerned.

France (Electricity Exports)

22. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received about exports from France of cheap electricity generated by nuclear power stations.

Mr. Goodlad: I have received no recent representations from members of the public or interested groups.

NCB Chairman

24. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to make the chairmanship of the National Coal Board a part-time position.

27. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he proposes any change in the functions and role of the chairman of the National Coal Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: No.

Trent Valley (Power Stations)

26. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if when he next meets the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board, he will raise with him the building of further coal-fired power stations in the Trent valley.

Mr. Goodlad: The board has stated that it does not intend to make any application for new power stations until the outcome of the Sizewell inquiry is known.

Manufacturing Industry

28. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the contributions made by the gas, coal and electricity industries towards the drive for greater productivity in the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend on 28 October 1985 at column *650*, in which I indicated that labour productivity generally in the public sector energy industries had improved since 1980. This will have contributed towards cost control and overall productivity in the manufacturing sector.

Leicester (Combined Heat and Power)

29. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on current progress of the feasibility study on combined heat and power in Leicester; and how this progress compares with the feasibility studies in respect of other cities.

Mr. David Hunt: Agreements between Belfast, Edinburgh and Leicester consortia and the Secretary of State for Energy for grant aid towards the preparation of prospectuses have been signed. The consortia's work programmes, which differ in some respects, began in April and are on schedule. The consortia expects to complete its programmes over the next 12 months.

Electricity Industry

30. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to announce plans for privatising the electricity industry.

Mr. Goodlad: There are no present plans to privatise the electricity supply industry.

Redundant Mineworkers' Scheme

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to bring forward proposals under section 3 of the Coal Industry Act 1975 to enable the redundant mineworkers' payments scheme to continue into the 1986-87 financial year.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend has made it clear that no decisions have yet been made on the details of any new scheme to succeed the current redundant mineworkers' payments scheme.

Energy Efficiency Year

31. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on progress on his plans for Energy Efficiency Year in 1986.

Mr. Peter Walker: During the year the Department will be launching a new version of its breakfast briefings for chief executives; its monergy roadshow will cover towns across the country. The events already organised by outside firms and organisations—again covering every corner of the country — will play a vital role in converting the awareness aroused by our national campaign into action at the level of the firm, the local authority, hospitals and other institutional consumers, and the householder.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with the progress to date of Energy Efficiency Year plans.

Mr. David Hunt: During the year the Department will be launching a new version of its breakfast briefings for chief executives; its monergy roadshow will cover towns across the country. The events already organised by outside firms and organsations—again covering every corner of the country — will play a vital role in converting the awareness aroused by our national campaign into action at the level of the firm, the local authority, hospitals and other institutional consumers, and the householder.

Energy Policy

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his energy policy in the light of the conclusions contained in the evidence submitted by the Council for the Protection of Rural England to the Energy Committee (H.C., 1984-85, No. 87), a copy of which has been sent to him, regarding the relative cost-effectiveness of investment in a national programme of energy conservation, on the one hand, and a series of orders for pressurised water nuclear reactors, on the other.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government's energy policy aims to ensure that all economic forms of energy are produced, supplied and used as efficiently as possible. The aim of our energy efficiency campaign is to make consumers aware of the enormous potential for economic conservation in all sectors of the energy market. Decisions on Sizewell B must await consideration of the inspector's report, which has not yet been submitted.

Windscale

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will list for each year since 1973 *(a)* the amount of plutonium passing through the material balance area at Windscale not open to safeguards inspectors and *(b)* the reactors of origin of the plutonium.

Mr. Goodlad: The material balance area processed by civil and defence plutonium during this period; it would not be in the national interest to disclose the amount of plutonium processed. Most of the re-processed fuel came from magnox reactors. A small amount came from a pilot oxide fuel head-end plant which ceased operation during 1973.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy which of the nuclear material balance areas at Windscale is prohibited to entry by nuclear safeguard inspectors.

Mr. Goodlad: The Euratom inspectors are at present excluded from the civil-military nuclear material balance area at BNFL Sellafield.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the issues that remain unresolved by Her Majesty's Government and the European Commission with regard to the implementation of a full safeguard inspection régime by the Euratom inspectorate of all nuclear materials processed at Windscale arising from the electricity boards' reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: I have nothing to add to my reply to the hon. Member on 4 April 1985 at column *694*.

Electricity Prices

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, when he next meets the chairman of the Electricity Council, he will raise with him the increases in electricity prices proposed for the coming year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I frequently meet the chairman of the electricity Council. Prices are a matter for the industry to decide.

TRANSPORT

M1 (Signpost 13)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date junction signpost 13 on the southbound section of the M1 motorway between Wakefield and London was reported damaged; and on what date it will be repaired.

Mr. Ridley: The sign was first reported damaged by the right hon. Gentleman's question. The damage is slight. The sign is due to be replaced in early January as part of the general sign replacement programme on this section of the M1.

Disabled Persons (Station Facilities)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Transport what provision he is making for continuation of the funding of the joint BR/GLC scheme to provide improved access facilities for the disabled at stations in Greater London following the abolition of the Greater London council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am confident that funding schemes of this kind will, after abolition of the GLC, be better handled by the London boroughs concerned. They already have powers to do this under section 59 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984.

M23/M25

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the reason why, six weeks after the Reigate/Wisley sections of the M25 were opened to traffic, the signposts on the M23 northbound at the junction with the M25 only indicates Sutton as the destination to the west and does not give the direct route to the North.

Mr. Ridley: New signs directing traffic west to Sutton and Heathrow and east to Dartford and Sevenoaks will be erected shortly. The delay arose because it was thought desirable to provide more signs than was originally planned.

Road Accidents (Compensation)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to establish a Government funded no-fault system of compensation for road accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The Government have no proposals to change the law of liability in this way. Such a system would have considerable public expenditure implications and invidiously discriminate among accident victims depending on whether they were injured on the roads or elsewhere.

British Transport (Advertising)

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has had any representations concerning possible private sector involvement in British Transport advertising.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have received several representations from private sector companies seeking involvement in British Transport Advertising Limited and from members of staff about possible purchase of BTA and the implications for them if BTA is sold to the private sector. British Rail and the National Bus Company are in the lead in considering the future of BTA. I understand that they intend to invite competitive bids for the whole of the current business.

Mr. Bernard Christopher Kennedy (Driving Licence)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport how long the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre has held Bernard Christopher Kennedy's driving licence; and why this has not been returned to Mr. Kennedy suitably corrected.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Mr. Kennedy's licence has been held at the centre since January 1985. Mr. Kennedy notified a correction to his date of birth which meant that his licence had to be regarded as expiring on his seventieth birthday in December 1984. He was invited to apply for its renewal and did so in March. Due to a clerical oversight incorrect action was taken on the application.

I apologise for the inconvenience caused to Mr. Kennedy and am glad to report that his licence was sent to him on 22 November. Those concerned will be reminded of the serious consequences and inconvenience which can be caused when correct procedures are not followed.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department takes to check on the roadworthiness of heavy goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: All heavy goods vehicles over 30 cwt unladen weight, except for a few special exemptions, are subject to an annual roadworthiness inspection conducted in one of the Department's 91 heavy goods vehicle testing stations.

This test includes all major safety components on both motor vehicles and trailers and comprises 66 areas of inspection. Details are set out in the goods vehicle tester's manual, published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Goods vehicles are subject to a roadside spot check by examiners from the Vehicle Inspectorate. A defective vehicle may be prohibited from use immediately or with delayed effect depending upon the severity of the defect. Each prohibition must be cleared by a further inspection which usually takes place at a heavy goods vehicle testing station. Over 42,000 vehicles were spot checked last year, of which about 6 per cent. were issued with an immediate prohibition and a further 13 per cent. with delayed prohibitions.

Other goods vehicle inspections are carried out by vehicle examiners on private premises or at HGV testing stations usually in connection with operator's licensing. Vehicles found to be defective may be prohibited. In addition the whole fleet may be subjected to an inspection, and a review may also be undertaken of the operator's maintenance arrangements. The results of such checks are provided to the Licensing Authority for his use in decisions regarding the grant or revocation of the operator's licence.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of all recorded motor vehicle accidents in the United Kingdom in the last five years involved heavy lorries.

Mrs. Chalker: Data are held centrally for Great Britain only. For the years 1982, 1983 and 1984 the figure was 5 per cent. Further years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of recorded motor vehicle accidents on motorways in the last five years involved heavy lorries.

Mrs. Chalker: For the years 1982, 1983 and 1984 the percentages are 20, 20 and 19 respectively. Further years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of recorded motor vehicle accidents on trunk roads in the last five years involved heavy lorries.

Mrs. Chalker: Data on accidents on trunk roads are readily available for England only, for 1983 and 1984. The figure for both 1983 and 1984 was 12 per cent.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of all recorded motor vehicle accidents in the United Kingdom in the last five years involved lorries registered outside the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: Data are only held centrally for Great Britain. For the years 1982, 1983 and 1984 the figures are 0·08, 0·08, 0·09 per cent. respectively. Further years' data could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Road Safety Committees

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Transport what provisions are made for road safety committees to continue, following the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Mrs. Chalker: It is for successor authorities to determine the arrangements they will need to fulfill their statutory obligations for road safety, including whatever they consider appropriate in respect of road safety committees. The Department has issued advice for metropolitan district councils on road safety issues to help them in their formulation of the necessary local framework to deal with their new responsibilities. Regional offices of the Department stand ready to provide further advice on particular local matters.

Speed Limit

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has carried out any estimate of the effect on the number of road accidents from lowering the speed limit to 60 mph on all roads in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Only 5 per cent. of accidents occur on roads with a speed limit of more than 60 mph. If the limit on these roads were reduced to 60 mph and all drivers observed the limit, one might expect a reduction in the number of accidents. No estimate of the extent of the reductions is possible because it is not clear how far, without a massive enforcement effort, drivers would voluntarily comply with the limit.

Mr. Lord asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has carried out any estimate of the savings in fuel costs which could result from a lowering of the speed limit to 60 mph on all roads in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: We estimate that the lowering of the speed limit on motorways and dual carriageways from 70 mph to 60 mph—if reflected in a reduction in actual speeds of cars—would result in a reduction of about 2 per cent. in total petrol consumed by cars using all roads.

Roads (Langbaurgh)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to designate any road in Langbaurgh as a trunk road; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: My right hon. Friend has no proposals at present to designate any road in Langbaurgh as a trunk road.

Marylebone/Northolt Park Line

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the inspector's report on the proposal to close the Marylebone-Northolt Park line and to make a decision thereon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Under the statutory closure procedures it will be for the London regional passengers committee to submit a report to my right hon. Friend. The committee will hold a public hearing before submitting its report but a date has not yet been fixed.

Trunk Roads (Safety Fencing)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *303*, when he expects the review of safety fencing on trunk roads to be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The review relates to the criteria for the provision of central reserve safety fences and will be completed in about six months' time.

Pneumatic Tyres

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Transport if Her Majesty's Government are satisfied with the safety of imported pneumatic tyres; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: Both imported and United Kingdom manufactured car tyres must meet the same international Standard prescribed in ECE regulation 30. We made regulations last year to prohibit the sale of substandard tyres, whether new or second-hand; enforcement of these regulations is the responsibility of trading standards officers. I have recently advised motorists to check the condition and markings on second-hand tyres before purchase.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Argentina

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commowealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to

remove any restrictions concerning British companies wishing to tender for oil exploration contracts in Argentina.

Mr. Eggar: We impose no restrictions on British companies wishing to tender for oil exploration contracts in Argentina. We have taken a number of measures aimed at a mutual lifting of restrictions affecting financial and commercial relations between the United Kingdom and Argentina. The Argentine Government have however reciprocated only partially.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the numbers and ranks of staff reporting to each.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

DIPLOMATIC WING:

Deputy under-secretary:
Relations with all countries in Europe; European Community (political co-operation); labour matters and co-ordination of planning: two assistant under-secretaries and 69 other staff.

Deputy under-secretary
Trade and economic relations; United Nations; energy, science, space, maritime, aviation and environment matters: two assistant under-secretaries and 142 other staff.

Deputy under-secretary
Personnel, finance, communications, office services, overseas estate, protocol, news and information matters; cultural relations; consular, migration and nationality questions; relations with Parliament: five assistant under-secretaries and 2,574 other staff.

Deputy under-secretary:
Relations with all countries in the Americas, the Caribbean, Australasia and Asia: two assistant under-secretaries and 148 other staff.

Deputy under-secretary:
Relations with all countries in Africa and the near and middle east; Commonwealth co-ordination: two assistant under-secretaries and 107 other staff.

Deputy under-secretary:
Relations with the Republic of Ireland; arms control, disarmament and defence matters; service advisers and attaches; security co-ordination: two assistant under-secretaries and 109 other staff.

AID WING

Deputy secretary
Bilateral, multilateral and functional aid; overseas manpower services; overseas service pensions: five under-secretaries and 880 other staff.

Arms Control

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the arms control agreements and treaties to which Her Majesty's Government are a signatory.

Mr. Renton: We are a signatory to the following arms control agreements and treaties:

The protocol for the prohibition of the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of bacteriological methods of warfare of 1925 (the Geneva protocol);

the Antarctic Treaty of 1959;
the treaty banning nuclear weapon tests in the atmosphere, in outer space and under water of 1963 (the partial test ban treaty);
the treaty on principles governing the activities of states in the exploration and use of outer space including the moon and other celestial bodies of 1967 (the outer space treaty);
the additional protocols of the treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons in Latin America of 1967 (the treaty of Tlatelolco);
the agreement concerning the establishment of a direct communication link between the residence of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in London and the Kremlin of 1967 (the Soviet Union-United Kingdom hotline agreement);
the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons of 1968;
the treaty on the prohibition of the emplacement of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on the seabed and the ocean floor and in the subsoil thereof of 1971 (the seabed treaty);
the convention on the prohibition of the development, production and stockpiling of bacteriological (biological) and toxin weapons and on their destruction of 1972 (the biological weapons convention);
the convention on the prohibition of military or any other hostile use of environmental modification techniques of 1977 (the ENMOD convention);
the (Soviet-United Kingdom) agreement on the prevention of accidental nuclear war of 1977;
the convention on prohibition or restrictions on the use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects of 1981 (the UN weaponry convention).

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to seek to secure a new comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Renton: In July we tabled a paper at the conference on disarmament in Geneva as a contribution to discussion of the outstanding problems of verification. In our view, solutions to these problems must be available before any comprehensive test ban treaty can be negotiated. The United Kingdom also joined western partners at the CD in proposing a mandate for an ad hoc committee at the CD to examine verification and other aspects of a comprehensive test ban with a view to negotiation. Unfortunately others have not so far agreed to this.

Nicaragua

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent co-operation with Nicaragua in relation to United Kingdom assistance to Colombia following the recent disaster.

Mr. Eggar: Nicaragua, like other countries in the region, co-operated promptly in providing landing and refuelling facilities for two Puma helicopters from Belize that transited through Nicaragua on their way to Colombia to provide assistance in the recent disaster. The short delay in obtaining Nicaraguan authorisation was due to communications difficulties associated with a revision of the helicopters' flight plan.

Nigeria

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he or his officials have had any discussions since 1981 with the Nigerian

authorities over trade in relation to export credit guarantees or other trade involving alleged frauds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Neither my right hon. and learned Friend nor our officials have discussed alleged trade frauds with the Nigerian authorities. The Nigerian high commission asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in September 1983 to put Nigerian police officers visiting the United Kingdom into contact with the United Kingdom police authorities to investigate alleged frauds involving forged export documents. The Nigerians were given the name of the appropriate police officer.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department's assistance was sought to help members of the fraud squad to go to Nigeria to investigate alleged fraud in relation to trade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes, in July 1985 by the City of London police. The Nigerian authorities were approached accordingly but a visit has not yet taken place.

Hong Kong

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any discussions have taken place with the Chinese Government concerning the 1,300 families of boat people living in Hong Kong waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: There have been discussions with the Chinese Government about the 14 boat wives from the Yau Ma Tei typhoon shelter who returned to China on 8 August and 24 October 1985. No other discussions with the Chinese Government on the boat-dwelling families in Hong Kong have taken place.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current state of human rights and civil liberties in Hong Kong.

Mr. Renton: Both the international covenant on civil and political rights and the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights apply to Hong Kong.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the age groups of children born in Hong Kong waters whose parents have been notified that they are liable to deportation.

Mr. Renton: In the families of the 14 boat wives who were asked to leave Hong Kong, none of the children were born in Hong Kong waters. Of the total of 29 children born to these 14 wives, 21 were born on land in Hong Kong. Their ages range from a few months to four years.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in the case of how many children born in Hong Kong territorial waters their parents have been notified that they are liable to deportation; and what is their current citizenship status.

Mr. Renton: All of the 21 children born in Hong Kong are Hong Kong British dependent territories citizens with right to land in Hong Kong, because they were born in Hong Kong to a parent (father) who had achieved settled status in Hong Kong.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of the Hong Kong Government towards immigration by boat people.

Mr. Renton: Vietnamese boat people who seek asylum in Hong Kong are allowed to remain temporarily in the territory, pending overseas resettlement. The Hong Kong Government only admit immigrants from China if they have been issued with one-way Chinese exit permits by the Chinese authorities. All illegal immigrants are liable to be repatriated.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to whether the boat people's families currently in Hong Kong were allowed to leave China and as to whether their Chinese citizenship status has been cancelled by the Chinese Government.

Mr. Renton: Fourteen boat wives who had been living in the Yau Ma Tei typhoon shelter and were found to be illegal immigrants in Hong Kong returned to China in August and October 1985. Their families remaining in Hong Kong are legal residents of Hong Kong. The wives who returned to China did not possess Chinese one-way exit permits. We understand that their Chinese nationality status and household registrations have not been cancelled by the Chinese Government.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis it has been decided by the Hong Kong Government that wives of boatmen in Hong Kong waters are not allowed on land except in case of serious illness.

Mr. Renton: Boat-dwelling wives who are legal residents of Hong Kong may come ashore any time. Boat-dwelling wives who are in Hong Kong without the permission of the director of immigration are illegal immigrants. They are allowed ashore only in exceptional circumstances.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to how many boat people have drowned in Hong Kong waters in each of the past five years.

Mr. Renton: Information on the number of boat people drowned in Hong Kong waters is not available, but the Hong Kong Government believe the figure to be very small.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Hong Kong Government have received from the boat brides support committee concerning the proposed deportation of certain boat women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The Hong Kong Government have received representations from various groups supporting the request made by the 14 wives from the Yau Ma Tei typhoon shelter for permission to remain in Hong Kong. These groups include the Society for Community Organisation, the Hong Kong federation of Catholic students, the husbands of the wives, various Catholic priests and the Catholic bishop of Hong Kong. In response to these representations the Hong Kong Government have pointed out that a legal channel, the one-way permit system, exists for residents of China to enter Hong Kong to join relatives; that in 1983 and 1984 30 per cent. of the one-way permits each year were issued to wives joining

husbands; and that the position of the 14 wives from the Yau Ma Tei typhoon shelter was essentially no different from that of other illegal immigrants from China residing in Hong Kong without the permission of the director of immigration, whether dwelling on boats or on land.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs why the 14 boatwomen who petitioned the Hong Kong Government about its immigration policy in respect of boat people have now been deported.

Mr. Renton: The 14 wives who petitioned the Hong Kong Government for permission to remain in Hong Kong have not been deported. They left voluntarily on 8 August and 24 October 1985.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how long the 14 women living on boats in Hong Kong waters, who have now been deported, had been there prior to their deportation.

Mr. Renton: Prior to their departure, the 14 wives had lived in Hong Kong waters from various periods ranging from, two and half years to four and a half years.

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any entry visas have been granted to members of the Nigerian police or Nigerian Security Organisation to investigate alleged fraud in relation to trade in any of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 to the present day.

Mr. Eggar: We are not aware of any cases of such visits where prior entry clearance has been sought.

It is not mandatory for Nigerian citizens visiting the United Kingdom to obtain prior entry clearances.

British Crown Colonies

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will continue to provide reports and official information about British Crown colonies to the United Nations Organisation; on what basis such information is presently given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We shall continue to provide the United Nations with information on conditions in the United Kingdom dependent territories, in fulfilment of our obligations under article 73(e) of the United Nations Charter.

International Year of Peace

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government intends to set up a national committee to co-ordinate the programme of the 1986 International Year of Peace declared by the United General Assembly on 24 October.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Western European Union

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his policy towards the Western European Union.

Mr. Renton: The Western European Union provides a unique forum for political consultation between the Foreign and Defence Ministers of member countries on a wide range of defence and security issues of importance to Europe. We aim through the WEU to improve European security co-operation, thus strengthening the European pillar of the North Atlantic Alliance, which remains the cornerstone of our security.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many applications for entry clearance in Bangladesh from the reapplicants' queue are interviewed on average each week;

(2) how many interviews are conducted in one day by an entry clearance officer at each post in the Indian sub-continent;

(3) how many applicants for entry clearance for settlement are interviewed on average each week at each post in the Indian sub-continent;

(4) what proportion of applications for entry clearance for settlement in the Indian sub-continent is in the reapplications queue;

(5) how many applicants in Bangladesh for entry clearance for settlement have been allocated to the reapplicants' queue.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not readily available. We are consulting the posts concerned. I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance officers are currently employed at each post in the Indian sub-continent.

Mr. Eggar: The information is as follows:

	Number
Dhaka	*15
New Delhi	†4
Bombay	5
Calcutta	1
Islamabad	14
Karachi	1

* Plus six on temporary attachment.
† Plus one on temporary attachment.

CIVIL SERVICE

Outside Appointments

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many candidates from outside the Civil Service have been recruited at grade 6 level and each grade above in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 to date.

Mr. Luce: The information requested for the years 1979-84 is given in the table. No data is, at present, available centrally for 1985. Some of the data for 1984 may be subject to correction because of late departmental returns.

Level	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Grade 1	1	3	0	1	2	0
Grade 2	2	1	1	3	2	1
Grade 3	7	4	9	9	12	6
Grade 4	5	1	1	6	10	8
Grade 5	22	25	13	15	31	29

Level	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Grade 6	125	78	55	67	131	156
	162	112	79	101	188	200

SCOTLAND

NHS Services (Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1979 the percentage of the expenditure on *(a)* medical and surgical equipment maintenance, *(b)* X-ray equipment maintenance, *(c)* laboratory equipment maintenance, *(d)* catering, *(e)* laundry, *(f)* cleaning, *(g)* engineering maintenance, *(h)* building maintenance, *(i)* grounds and so on, maintenance, *(j)* vehicle maintenance and *(k)* computers, which has been paid to private contractors for services provided to the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Information on total expenditure in these areas is not readily available. Nor do health board accounts distinguish expenditure on services provided by private companies.

Tendering Exercises

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each tendering exercise for hospital ancillary services of which his Department is aware *(a)* the health board concerned, *(b)* the hospital concerned, *(c)* the service concerned (laundry, catering or cleaning), *(d)* the successful tenderer and *(e)* the saving achieved over the cost in the previous year.

Mr. John MacKay: Health boards are presently engaged in seeking and assessing competitive tenders for support services in a range of premises, including hospitals.

Health Boards (Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will give, for each health board in 1984-85, the total expenditure on cleaning, the total expenditure on services provided by private cleaning companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former, and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year;

(2) if he will give for each health board in 1984-85 the total expenditure on catering, the total expenditure on services provided by private cleaning companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year;

(3) if he will give for each health board in 1984-85 the total expenditure on laundry, the total expenditure on services provided by private laundry companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage on the previous year.

Mr. John MacKay: Health board accounts do not distinguish expenditure on services provided by private companies. The following was the total expenditure by health boards on cleaning, catering and laundry services in 1984-85.

Board	Cleaning £	Catering £	Laundry £
Argyll and Clyde	3,937,397	4,423,165	1,318,806
Ayrshire and Arran	2,707,511	3,739,506	867,955
Borders	807,901	1,016,268	249,964
Dumfries and Galloway	1,403,081	1,905,085	381,957
Fife	2,630,955	3,270,266	876,203
Forth Valley	2,491,424	3,546,594	869,094
Grampian	5,127,530	5,707,548	1,305,265
Greater Glasgow	12,344,260	16,042,772	4,112,044
Highland	1,885,899	1,877,033	520,203
Lanarkshire	4,456,230	5,333,478	1,276,334
Lothian	7,074,467	9,382,453	2,172,182
Orkney	91,106	177,379	78,934
Shetland	171,704	215,775	89,687
Tayside	5,261,993	6,534,031	1,743,311
Western Isles	239,646	394,435	149,514

Ambulance Service

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year since 1979 the number of ambulance service journeys in Scotland carrying non-National Health Service patients and the total mileage involved.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is not available in precisely the form requested. The following table shows the mileage for all journeys by ambulances on non-NHS business, including journeys for ambulances hired for attendance at occasions such as sporting events.

Year	Non-NHS patients carried	Total Mileage
1979	323	9,571
1980	367	12,050
1981	325	12,467
1982	333	12,655
1983	332	12,727
1984	410	14,290

In 1984 the Scottish ambulance service carried more than two million patients and ambulances travelled over 15 million miles.

Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the private hospitals and nursing homes in Scotland which treat National Health Service patients under contractual arrangements with health boards.

Mr. John MacKay: The latest available information, which relates to 31 March 1984, is as follows:

Argyll and Clyde
- Princess Louise hospital, Bishopton
- St. Mary's Private hospital, Barrhead

Borders
- St. Aidan's private hospital, Melrose
- St. Mary's hospital, Galashiels

Greater Glasgow
- Jewish Old Age, Newark Drive
- St. Margaret's hospital, Clydebank
- Marie Curie Memorial, Glasgow

Highland
- St. Vincents home, Kingussie

Lanarkshire
- Assumption house, Airdrie
- St. Mary's convalescent home, Lanark
- St. Charles private hospital, Carstairs

Lothian
- St. Columba's hospice, Edinburgh
- St. Joseph's hospital, Rosewell
- Queensberry house, Edinburgh
- Fairmile nursing home, Edinburgh

Health Board Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each year since 1979, for each health board and for Scotland as whole, the number of deaths and discharges among, and the number of beds occupied on a given date by, patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service, breaking the figures down by category of patient treated.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is as follows:

A. Deaths and discharges: year ending 30 September

Health Board Specialty	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Borders						
Mental deficiency	8	4	3	9	7	—
Total	8	4	3	9	7	—
Argyll and Clyde						
Mental deficiency	9	9	6	4	5	2
General unclassified	39	56	64	24	29	—
Geriatric long stay	—	—	—	—	15	26
Total	48	65	70	28	49	28
Greater Glasgow						
Geriatric long stay	48	51	85	97	11	10
General medicine	157	195	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	263	247	353	379
Total	205	246	348	344	364	389
Highland						
Convalescent	175	201	216	245	130	—
Geriatric long stay	11	11	11	14	13	12
Total	186	212	227	259	143	12
Lanarkshire						
Convalescent	581	543	555	509	530	531
Geriatric long stay	11	11	20	37	21	26
Mental deficiency	4	8	7	4	56	52
Total	596	562	582	550	607	609
Lothian						
Mental deficiency	142	12	98	103	84	13
Geriatric long stay	46	136	4	7	14	51
Others	151	149	129	342	602	572
Total	339	297	231	452	700	636
Scotland						
General medicine	157	195	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	756	744	771	754	660	531
Geriatric long stay	212	209	214	155	74	125
Mental deficiency	67	33	20	120	152	67
General unclassified	39	56	64	24	29	—
Others	151	149	392	589	955	951
Total	1,382	1,386	1,461	1,642	1,870	1,674

* Data refers to 31 March.

B. Average bed occupancy: year ending 30 September

Health Board Specialty	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	**1984*
Borders						
Mental deficiency	101	100	94	86	78	76
Total	101	100	94	86	78	76
Argyll and Clyde						
Mental deficiency	76	76	75	72	68	68
General unclassified	51	58	59	40	24	—
Geriatric long-stay	—	—	—	—	20	40
Total	127	134	134	112	112	108
Greater Glasgow						
Geriatric long-stay	65	64	73	71	18	21
General medicine	29	29	—	—	—	—
Others	—	—	29	29	83	72
Total	94	93	102	100	101	93
Highland						
Convalescent	7	8	8	9	4	—
Geriatric long-stay	18	18	18	17	18	18

Health Board Specialty	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	*1984
Total	25	26	26	26	22	18
Lanarkshire						
Convalescent	40	38	36	35	36	35
Geriatric long-stay	56	55	52	53	52	52
Mental deficiency	51	53	55	49	38	14
Total	147	146	143	137	126	101
Lothian						
Mental deficiency	165	214	170	168	170	186
Geriatric long-stay	214	166	204	200	192	85
Others	37	38	34	42	58	39
Total	416	418	408	410	420	310
Scotland						
General medicine	29	29	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	47	46	45	44	40	35
Geriatric long-stay	303	304	312	341	300	216
Mental deficiency	442	443	427	375	354	344
General unclassified	51	58	59	40	24	—
Others	37	38	63	71	141	111
Total	909	918	906	871	859	706

* Data refer to 31 March.

Patient Care (Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board and for Scotland as a whole the expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care in each year since 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: The costs of maintaining patients in hospitals not vested in the Secretary of State are as follows:

£'000s

Health board	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Argyll and Clyde	722	759	737	971	795	984
Ayrshire and Arran	—	—	—	6	—	—
Borders	—	345	386	415	442	436
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife	—	—	—	—	20	20
Forth Valley	—	—	60	68	—	97
Grampian	—	—	—	—	—	—
Greater Glasgow	658	928	970	1,071	1,421	1,480
Highland	120	154	173	186	203	199
Lanarkshire	514	747	719	728	693	664
Lothian	2,248	2,826	3,498	3,438	3,774	4,032
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	12	11	243	15	56	43
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—
Scotland	4,274	5,770	6,786	6,898	7,404	7,955

Private Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for each year since 1979, the health boards for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient income.

Mr. John MacKay: No accounts of health boards have been qualified by the statutory auditor in respect of control over private patient income in the period in question.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for 1984-85 and for each health board, the number of authorised pay beds at the end of the year and their average daily occupancy by private patients, expressed both as a number of beds and as a percentage; and if he will give the 1983-84 figures for comparison.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is set out in the table.

Health Board	Authorised pay beds at 31 March 1985	Average daily occupancy		Authorised pay beds at 31 March 1984	Average daily occupancy	
		Numbers	Percentage		Numbers	Percentage
Argyll and Clyde	13	0·8	5·9	13	2·6	19·7
Ayrshire and Arran	11	3·3	29·9	11	4·5	41·0
Borders	—	—	—	—	—	—

Health Board	Authorised pay beds at 31 March 1985	Average daily occupancy		Authorised pay beds at 31 March 1984	Average daily occupancy	
		Numbers	Percentage		Numbers	Percentage
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife	1	—	—	—	—	—
Forth Valley	5	1·1	22·4	5	1·2	24·9
Grampian	17	3·7	21·8	17	3·0	17·6
Greater Glasgow	30	1·6	5·3	30	0·4	12·8
Highland	4	0·5	11·6	4	0·7	16·5
Lanarkshire	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lothian	19	5·0	26·4	19	6·7	35·4
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	9	1·7	19·0	9	1·2	13·1
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—
All Scotland	109	19·4	17·8	108	23·5	21·8

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each year since 1970 and for each health board, the number of attendances by *(a)* private outpatients, *(b)* private day cases and *(c)* private regular day cases.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each health board *(a)* the income from private resident patients, *(b)* the amount written off as bad debts from private resident patients, *(c)* the income from private non-resident patients and *(d)* the amount written off as bad debts from private non-resident patients.

Mr. John MacKay: The information available is set out in the table. Central information on amounts written off as bad debts does not distinguish between resident and non-resident patients.

Income from private patients in NHS hospitals in Scotland

Health board	1979-80			1980-81			1981-82		
	Income		Amounts Written off	Income		Amounts Written off	Income		Amounts Written off
	Resident	Non resident		Resident	Non resident		Resident	Non resident	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Argyll and Clyde	77,052	—	—	96,677	—	247	102,596	—	—
Ayrshire and Arran	63,464	—	128	89,870	—	3	98,700	—	64
Borders	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fife	1,440	—	9	1,259	—	421	1,605	42	—
Forth Valley	14,494	—	—	39,323	—	—	36,033	—	—
Grampian	120,882	8,637	120	129,356	13,160	473	151,584	16,998	1,920
Greater Glasgow	92,836	1,205	619	129,977	245	2,054	203,192	775	3,388
Highland	11,616	—	—	8,098	—	—	12,387	—	113
Lanarkshire	—	—	—	465	—	—	1,717	—	382
Lothian	132,906	1,363	3,667	177,936	1,103	955	206,654	3,523	1,246
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	11	—
Tayside	11,001	—	254	15,466	7	221	30,029	—	727
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All Scotland	525,691	11,210	4,797	688,427	14,515	4,374	844,507	21,349	7,840

Health board	1982-83			1983-84			1984-85		
	Income		Amounts Written off	Income		Amounts Written off	Income		Amounts Written off
	Resident	Non resident		Resident	Non resident		Resident	Non resident	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Argyll and Clyde	83,266	—	—	143,169	133	109	113,574	142	90
Ayrshire and Arran	91,984	—	447	141,236	7,242	184	99,483	10,757	1,504
Borders	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	—	—	—	419	62	—	883	—
Fife	1,038	31	70	—	—	—	—	—	—
Forth Valley	32,078	46	—	41,469	4,847	313	41,579	7,252	—
Grampian	135,417	11,658	273	138,123	20,518	856	177,911	27,602	92
Greater Glasgow	80,329	23	5,015	156,257	18	1,269	78,418	163	2,284
Highland	8,241	27	—	20,010	27	—	18,242	223	—
Lanarkshire	—	—	—	—	314	—	—	981	—
Lothian	204,872	4,100	1,913	242,232	13,725	11	172,551	18,545	28,774

Health board	1982-83 Income Resident £	1982-83 Income Non resident £	1982-83 Amounts Written off £	1983-84 Income Resident £	1983-84 Income Non resident £	1983-84 Amounts Written off £	1984-85 Income Resident £	1984-85 Income Non resident £	1984-85 Amounts Written off £
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	12,980	—	1,173	67,784	2,552	434	60,761	7,666	185
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All Scotland	650,205	15,839	8,891	950,280	49,795	3,238	762,519	73,888	32,929

Amenity Beds

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each health board the number of *(a)* amenity beds, *(b)* discharges and deaths from amenity beds, *(c)* the amenity beds occupied on average, *(d)* the percentage occupancy and *(e)* the income from amenity patients in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: Records are not available centrally of the number of beds which can be used as amenity beds or of the number of patients using such facilities. The number of such beds is however small compared to the overall provision by health boards.

The income derived from the use of amenity beds in 1983 and 1984 is as follows:

Health Board	1983-84	1984-85
		£
Argyll and Clyde	—	55
Ayrshire and Arran	1,584	1,250
Borders	345	995
Dumfries and Galloway	7,195	6,102
Fife	8,570	6,700
Forth Valley	845	1,295
Grampian	92,987	36,747
Greater Glasgow	—	—
Highland	1,613	3,057
Lanarkshire	—	—
Lothian	63,629	63,260
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	10,324	6,718
Western Isles	—	—

Consultants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, for each year since 1970 and for each health board, the total number of consultants holding *(a)* full-time, *(b)* maximum part-time, *(c)* other part-time and *(d)* honorary contracts.

Mr. John MacKay: For years before 1976 the information is not available by health board and is shown on an all Scotland basis in table 1. The information available for the years 1976 to 1980 is in table 2. The information in the form requested is available only for the years 1981 to 1984 and is in table 3.

Table 1
Consultants in Scotland
Number by Nature of Contract
at 30 September 1970-75

	Scotland
1970	
Total	1,559
Whole-time	910
Part-time	413
Honorary	236
1971	
Total	1,619
Whole-time	988
Part-time	384
Honorary	247
1972	
Total	1,659
Whole-time	1,034
Part-time	364
Honorary	261
1973	
Total	1,710
Whole-time	1,080
Part-time	359
Honorary	271
1974	
Total	1,743
Whole-time	1,126
Part-time	343
Honorary	274
1975	
Total	1,773
Whole-time	1,197
Part-time	307
Honorary	269

Note: Consultants with maximum part-time contracts are included under 'Part-time'.

TABLE 2
Consultants in Scotland
Number by nature of contract and health board at 30 September 1976 to 1980

	Scotland	CSA	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanarkshire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
1976																	
TOTAL	1,827	12	96	24	17	49	67	62	154	615	63	90	357	2	1	175	6
Whole-time	1,253	10	78	21	17	37	62	56	85	394	59	86	196	1	1	112	5
Part-time	287	2	18	3	—	12	5	6	29	120	4	4	60	1	—	18	1
Honorary	287	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	40	101	—	—	101	—	—	45	—
1977																	
TOTAL	1,853	12	94	66	16	48	69	63	156	619	63	105	353	2	1	180	6
Whole-time	1,280	9	74	53	16	36	64	55	87	408	59	99	195	1	1	118	5
Part-time	285	3	20	13	—	12	5	8	28	110	4	6	58	1	—	16	1

	Scotland	CSA	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanarkshire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
Honorary	288	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	41	101	—	—	100	—	—	46	—
1978																	
TOTAL	1,909	11	96	76	17	47	71	63	165	625	65	120	366	2	1	182	6
Whole-time	1,345	10	76	63	17	36	67	55	90	418	62	115	205	1	1	122	5
Part-time	271	1	20	13	—	11	4	8	30	104	3	5	63	1	—	13	1
Honorary	293	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	45	103	—	—	98	—	—	47	—
1979																	
TOTAL	1,940	11	94	76	19	48	71	66	169	630	63	128	374	2	1	182	6
Whole-time	1,353	10	73	64	19	36	66	56	92	419	59	122	210	1	1	120	5
Part-time	281	1	21	12	—	12	5	10	31	102	4	6	61	1	—	14	1
Honorary	306	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	46	109	—	—	103	—	—	48	—
1980																	
TOTAL	1,961	13	95	78	19	48	71	68	168	630	63	126	388	1	2	185	6
Whole-time	1,375	12	79	66	19	35	65	59	96	417	60	121	217	1	2	121	5
Part-time	269	1	16	12	—	13	6	9	27	102	3	5	60	—	—	14	1
Honorary	317	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	45	111	—	—	111	—	—	50	—

Note: Consultants with maximum part-time contracts are included under 'Part-time'

TABLE 3
Consultants in Scotland
Number by Nature of contract and health board at 30 September 1980 to 1984

	Scotland	CSA	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanarkshire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
1981																	
TOTAL	1,981	13	98	80	18	47	76	69	168	632	67	126	383	1	2	195	6
Whole-time	1,400	12	79	69	18	36	70	59	96	418	64	120	221	1	2	130	5
Maximum part-time	206	—	14	9	—	2	4	9	21	84	1	6	43	—	—	13	—
Part-time	53	1	5	2	—	9	2	1	5	11	2	—	12	—	—	2	1
Honorary	322	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	46	119	—	—	107	—	—	50	—
1982																	
TOTAL	2,026	14	103	84	19	49	75	74	172	636	66	134	385	1	2	186	6
Whole-time	1,437	13	84	72	19	38	69	63	102	424	64	127	225	1	2	129	5
Maximum part-time	205	—	14	9	—	2	4	10	20	83	1	6	45	—	—	11	—
Part-time	50	1	5	3	—	9	2	1	5	9	1	1	10	—	—	2	1
Honorary	314	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	45	120	—	—	105	—	—	44	—
1983																	
TOTAL	2,026	14	103	82	18	52	78	77	166	643	68	142	391	1	2	183	6
Whole-time	1,457	14	85	71	18	41	75	66	101	428	66	134	221	1	2	129	5
Maximum part-time	204	—	14	9	—	2	2	10	21	81	1	6	46	—	—	12	—
Part-time	49	—	4	2	—	9	1	1	5	12	1	2	9	—	—	2	1
Honorary	316	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	39	122	—	—	115	—	—	40	—
1984																	
TOTAL	2,073	13	107	85	20	53	81	75	171	641	70	146	406	1	2	196	6
Whole-time	1,490	13	88	74	20	43	78	64	101	428	69	138	225	1	2	141	5
Maximum part-time	213	—	14	9	—	2	2	10	23	85	—	6	51	—	—	11	—
Part-time	50	—	5	2	—	8	1	1	5	10	1	2	12	—	—	2	1
Honorary	320	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42	118	—	—	118	—	—	42	—

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals for private hospital developments have been notified to or authorised by him under the Health Services Act 1976 as amended by the Health Services Act 1980 since 1 May.

Mr. John MacKay: None.

Scottish Examination Board

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* a statistical breakdown of the total number of official markers for the 1984 Scottish Examination Board certificate examinations which details *(a)* the number of markers who were otherwise employed as college lecturers, *(b)* the number of markers who were otherwise employed as full-time teachers, *(c)* the number of markers who were retired college lecturers, and *(d)* the number of markers who were retired school teachers.

Mr. Allan Stewart: To prepare a breakdown in the categories requested, the Scottish Examination Board will require to scrutinise the records of their current and former markers individually, some 12,000 in all. I have asked it to do so, and will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the current industrial dispute in Scottish teaching has led to a dilution of the qualifications normally required for engagement as an official marker with the Scottish Examination Board.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As I indicated in my answer of 17 June 1985 to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) at column *31*, the Scottish Examination Board has not relaxed the qualifications required for appointment as markers of Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) examination scripts. These are at least three years' experience of presenting pupils for the SCE or three years' examining experience in tertiary education in Scotland.

School Closures

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will publish a table giving figures region by region of the schools that have been closed since 1979, as a result of the drop in the school rolls.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* current and past research projects since 1955 into the causes, means of transmission and treatment of Legionnaire's disease in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Information about projects funded by the Scottish Home and Health Department is set out in the table.

Project	*Research Body*	*Grant £*	*Date commenced*	*Date completed*
1. To obtain further information about the incidence of Legionnaire's disease in Scotland	University of Glasgow Department of Infectious Diseases, Ruchill Hospital, Glasgow	5,933	1979	1980
2. Investigation into Legionnaire's disease and other infections among package tourists and other travellers (extension of No. 1)	As above	5,746	1980	1982

Note: The disease was not recognised as a specific entity until 1977.
The Scottish Home and Health Department is willing to receive applications for funds to support soundly based research proposals through its research grants scheme.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the guidelines sent by his Department *(a)* to health boards and *(b)* to local authorities about keeping cooling towers clean.

Mr. John MacKay: A copy of the guidance relating to Legionnaire's disease and hospital water systems issued to health boards in 1980, and re-issued earlier this year, has been placed in the Library. No guidance on this matter has been issued to local authorities in Scotland.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if any doctors from the communicable disease surveillance centre at Colindale have been asked to help the Greater Glasgow health board with its investigation into the causes of the current outbreak of Legionnaire's disease at Glasgow royal infirmary and elsewhere in Glasgow.

Mr. John MacKay: No; but I am satisfied that Greater Glasgow health board is well able to conduct these investigations and that it will seek such outside advice as it considers necessary.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of deaths from Legionnaire's disease in *(a)* the Greater Glasgow health board area and *(b)* Scotland in each of the past 10 years and if he will detail in each year the months in which those deaths occurred.

Mr. John MacKay: The term Legionnaire's disease was not used before 1978. The numbers of deaths reported to the Registrar General from 1978 to 1985, in which the underlying cause of death was recorded as Legionnaire's disease, are given in the tables. As is the usual practice in the recording of deaths by the Registrar General the figures relate to the area of residence of the deceased and not to the area where they died. The figures for 1985 are provisional.

Deaths in Scotland of persons resident on Greater Glasgow health board area

	1978	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
January	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
February	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
March	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
April	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
May	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
June	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
July	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
August	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
September	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
October	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
November	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—
December	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
				Deaths in Scotland				
January	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
February	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
March	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
April	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
May	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
June	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
July	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—
August	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
September	—	—	1	—	1	—	1	—

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	*1985
October	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—
November	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	3
December	—	1	—	1	—	2	—	—

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will fund a research project into the role played by building design in the spread of Legionnaire's disease in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The public health laboratory service was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Security in 1981 to undertake an extensive environmental study into Legionnaire's disease. The Health Departments will consider the need for further research in the light of the report on the study and the results of the public inquiry into the outbreak at Stafford district general hospital.

Health Departments will also take into account the findings of the investigation being undertaken by Greater Glasgow health board.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from residents of the constituency of Glasgow central about deaths resulting from Legionnaire's disease *(a)* at Glasgow royal infirmary and *(b)* in housing blocks adjacent to the infirmary.

Mr. John MacKay: None.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence his Department has compiled about the relative incidence of Legionnaire's disease among people living *(a)* in modern buildings with air conditioning and showers and *(b)* in other buildings.

Mr. John MacKay: Data are not collected centrally about the type of accommodation in which patients live.

Infection Control Officers

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the number of infection control officers designated within the Greater Glasgow health board area along with the number of hospitals for which they are responsible; and if he will list any hospitals within the area which do not have a designated infection control officer.

Mr. John MacKay: This is a matter for the Greater Glasgow health board and the information is not available centrally.

Community Medicine (Glasgow)

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of doctors working full-time and part-time in community medicine within the Greater Glasgow health board area, the number of such doctors involved in the epidemiology of infectious diseases, the equivalent number of such doctors deployed in other health board areas and the number of community medical officers per head of population in each health board area.

Mr. John MacKay: Information is not held centrally which would identify the number of specialists in community medicine who are involved in the epidemiology of infectious diseases.

The latest available information requested about staff numbers is as follows:

Specialists in community medicine at 30 September 1984

Health board	*NHS full-time*	*NHS part-time*	*Honorary part-time*	*Total numbers*	*Whole-time equivalent*	*Whole-time equivalent per 100,000 population*
Greater Glasgow	20	—	6	26	23·8	2·4
Argyll and Clyde	10	—	—	10	10·0	2·2
Ayrshire and Arran	8	—	—	8	8·0	2·1
Borders	3	—	—	3	3·0	3·0
Dumfries and Galloway	2	—	—	2	2·0	1·4
Fife	8	—	—	8	8·0	2·3
Forth Valley	6	—	—	6	6·0	2·2
Grampian	11	—	3	14	12·9	2·6
Highland	5	—	—	5	5·0	2·5
Lanarkshire	11	—	—	11	11·0	1·9
Lothian	17	1	7	25	21·6	2·9
Orkney	1	—	—	1	1·0	5·2
Shetland	1	—	—	1	1·0	4·3
Tayside	13	—	4	17	15·5	3·9
Western Isles	1	—	—	1	1·0	3·2
Scotland	117	1	20	138	129·8	2·7

In addition the Common Services Agency employ 10 full-time specialists in community medicine one of whom is employed in the communicable diseases unit based at Ruchill hospital, Glasgow.

Voluntary Organisations (Grants)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will list in the *Official Report* those voluntary bodies and organisations assisted by his

Department with grant aid in the last financial year for which figures are available and the size of the grant so given.

Mr. Younger: The information in respect of grants paid in 1984-85 is as follows:

Grants Under Section 73 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and the Further Education (Scotland) Regulations 1959-79

	Grant Paid 1984-85 £
National Voluntary Organisations	
Abernethy Trust Centre (formerly Abernethy Outdoor Centre)	1,979
Boys' Brigade	26,364
Boys' Club of Scotland	23,000
British Red Cross Society	2,103
British Youth Council (Scotland)	18,504
Church of Scotland Youth Education Committee (formerly Church of Scotland Committee on Parish Education)	15,296
Community Service Volunteers	25,100
Co-operative Union	5,608
Crusaders Union	512
Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme	12,670
Endeavour Training Scotland	11,563
Episcopal Church Youth Committee	1,660
Fair Play for Children	8,550
Girls' Brigade	6,500
Girl Guide Association	10,173
Iona Community	1,196
Loch Eil Outward Bound	14,297
Salvation Army	9,421
Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs	70,960
Scottish Association of Youth Clubs	81,700
Scottish Centre for Tuition of Disabled	17,868
Scottish Council of Community and Voluntary Organisations (formerly Scottish Council of Social Service)	1,709
Scottish Chess Association	8,500
Scottish Conservation Projects Trust (formerly Conservation Volunteers)	12,353
Scottish Girls Venture Corps	1,550
Scottish National Council of YMCA's	38,701
Scottish School Boys Clubs	4,676
Scottish Standing Conference of VYO's	20,719
Scottish Woman's Rural Institutes	28,795
Scottish Youth Hostels Association	4,496
Scripture Union	6,160
Scout Association	21,630
YWCA of Great Britain	34,324
YWCA of Scotland	719
Adult Education Organisations	
Aberdeen University	17,276
Age Concern Scotland	16,377
Dundee University	11,517
Edinburgh University	21,422
Glasgow University	3,108
Scottish Adult Basic Education Unit	160,650
Scottish Institute of Adult Education	26,020
Scottish Trade Union Congress	38,955
Trade Union Congress	6,945
WEA North of Scotland	53,125
WEA South East of Scotland	38,028
WEA West of Scotland	62,683
Arts' Organisations	
An Comunn Gaidhealach	69,300
Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association	8,400
Sabhal Mor Ostaig	11,750
Scottish Amateur Music Association	2,500
Scottish Community Drama Association	23,200
Scottish Youth Theatre	40,084
National Youth Orchestra of Scotland	21,155
Capital Grants	
To Local Voluntary Youth and Community Organisations for the Provision of Community Halls	729,945

Grants under Appropriation Act

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Scottish Museums Council	333,500
Royal Society of Edinburgh	239,000
Royal Scottish Geographical Society	2,200
Unemployed Voluntary Action Fund	550,000

Grants under section 9 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Aberlour Child Care Trust	4,157
Age Concern (Scotland)	29,273
Albyn House Association	305
Ark Housing Association	55
Ayrshire Council on Alcoholism	286
Ayr Volunteer Exchange	101
Barony Housing Association	116
Barra and Vatersay Council of Social Service	167
Caledonian Certificate in Social Service Scheme	56,583
Church of Scotland	52,644
Cornerstone Society for the Mentally Handicapped	325
Crossroads Youth and Community Association	51,884
Dr. Barnardo's	36,617
Douglas Association	285
Dumbarton District Council on Alcoholism	334
Dumfries Action Centre	194
Edinburgh and District Council on Alcoholism	270
Edinburgh Council of Social Service	24,300
Edinburgh Family Service Unit	15,448
Edinburgh Volunteer Exchange	143
Edinburgh Walk-In Numeracy Centre	197
Epilepsy Association of Scotland	5,255
Family Care	30,083
Fern Tower—Notre Dame Adolescent Unit	164
Fife Council on Alcoholism	150
Forth Certificate in Social Service Scheme	45,046
Garvald Training Centre	382
Glasgow Council on Alcoholism	287
Inverness Council on Alcoholism	155
Islay Council of Social Service	108
Key Housing Association	309
Leonard Cheshire Home	66
Lochaber Voluntary Organisations Group	187
National Catholic Social Care	18,574
National Children's Home	3,592
Open University/Childminding Project	4,000
Orkney Council of Social Service	156
Quarrier's Homes	39,507
Red Cross Society (Scotland)	403
Renfrew District Council on Alcoholism	152
Robert Douglas Memorial Home	65
Rossie List 'D' Schools	104
Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	17,723
Salvation Army	16,965
Scottish Adoption Association	216
Scottish Association for Care and Resettlement of Offenders	180
Scottish Association for Mental Health	125
Scottish Child and Family Alliance	11,485
Scottish Council on Alcoholism	21,000
Scottish Council for Single Parents	15,164
Scottish Council for Community and Voluntary Organisations	15,810
Scottish Council for Spastics	875
Scottish Family Conciliation Service (Lothian)	248

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Scottish Institute of Human Relations	4,694
Scottish Marriage Guidance Council	10,327
Scottish Pre-school Play Groups Association (SCOPE)	11,336
Scottish Women's Aid	20,592
St. Euphrasia's Centre	274
St. Margaret of Scotland Adoption Society	104
Stirling District Council of Social Service	174
Sunnybrae Centre	172
Tayside Area Council on Alcoholism	185
The Talbot Association	908
Voluntary Association of Nairn Groups	217
Voluntary Service Aberdeen	36,834
Volunteer Centre, Glasgow	148
Wayside Club	149
West of Scotland Certificate in Social Service Scheme	45,519

List of grants paid under section 10(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 in 1984-85

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Aberdeen and North East Association for Mental Health	15,617
Aberlour Child Care Trust	5,352
Aberdeen Cyrenians	651
Age Concern Scotland	35,384
Albyn House Association Ltd.	109,026
Alzheimers Disease Society	265
Ark Housing Association	2,568
Barony Housing Association	3,729
Blantyre Volunteer Group Co-ordination Service	20,142
Bo'ness Small Grants Scheme	10,100
British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering	28,000
British Association for Service to the Elderly	450
British Red Cross Society (Scottish Branch)	3,436
Brittle Bone Society	4,500
Brook Advisory Centre	3,635
Burnfoot Project	11,612
Canongate Youth Project	11,578
Children's Hearing Forum	1,000
Church of Scotland	17,368
Community Service Volunteers (Headquarters)	15,590
Community Service Volunteers (Independent Living Scheme)	18,386
Cornerstone Society for the Mentally Handicapped	1,807
Crossroads (Scotland)	20,198
Cruse	6,535
Dean Orphanage Trust	2,229
Dr. Barnardo's	47,185
Dumfries Action Centre	200
Dundee Children's Trust (Mars Project)	56,760
Edinburgh Council for Single Homeless	9,598
Edinburgh Council for Social Service	7,262
Edinburgh and East of Scotland Society for the Deaf	16,877
Edinburgh University Settlement	4,995
Epilepsy Association of Scotland	4,500
Family Fund	506,665
Fife Befriending Scheme	2,850
Galashiels Youth Project	22,000
Gingerbread	24,801
Glasgow Volunteer Centre	5,807
Grampian Volunteer Scheme	1,000
Help Levenmouth (Aberhill Youth Project)	11,161
IT Resources Centre (Quarriers)	113,354
Iona Community	5,000
Key Housing Association	1,845
L'Arche	2,800
Leonard Cheshire Foundation	1,532
Levenmouth Small Grants Scheme	10,100
Local Councils of Social Service	274,297
Lochaber Handicapped Association	376
Lothian Allelon	11,203
Machars Action (East Wigtown)	24,358
Moray Firth Community Radio	7,322
National Association of Victim Support Schemes	600
National Childminders Association	2,276
National Children's Home	2,904
National Cyrenians	377
National Foster Care Association	12,350
National Playbus Association	10,040
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	5,942
Parents Programme for Adult Skills	4,144
Perth Volunteer Befriending Scheme	12,146
Physically Handicapped and Able Bodied Clubs	10,070
Pilton Youth Programme	44,546
Play Matters	2,200
Primrosehill Centre for Parents & Children	2,328
Quarriers Homes	29,966
Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	71,717
Rural and Urban Training Scheme	467
Salvation Army	3,484
Samaritans	6,900
Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	146,418
Scottish Association for Counselling	456
Scottish Association for the Deaf	17,684
Scottish Association for the Interpreters for the Deaf	2,604
Scottish Association for Mental Health	32,700
Scottish Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	6,544
Scottish Child and Family Alliance	31,397
Scottish Council for Community and Voluntary Organisations	320,205
Scottish Council on Disability	190,983
Scottish Council for Opportunity in Play Experience	83,457
Scottish Council for Single Homeless	7,537
Scottish Council for Single Parents	29,274
Scottish Council for Spastics	2,750
Scottish Family Conciliation Service	21,252
Scottish Marriage Guidance Council	40,580
Scottish Paraplegic (Spinal Injury) Association	5,400
Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped	6,546
Scottish Spina Bifida Association	14,400
Scottish Women's Aid	38,274
SEAL Association	2,986
SENSE (National Deaf Blind and Rubella Handicapped Association)	1,536
Six Circle Group	5,000
Slessor Youth Project	25,853
Special Equipment and Aids for Living (Sequal)	2,000
Strathkelvin Project	49,806
St. Aidans Project	1,451
St. Euphrasia's Centre	179,461
St. Vincent's Centre for the Deaf	10,162
Stop over Group-Edinburgh	1,844
Talbot Association	1,384
Thistle Foundation	1,542
Voluntary Service Aberdeen	30,071
Voluntary Service Aberdeen (Tulloch House)	2,556

Grants under the Educational Development, Research and Services (Scotland) Grant Regulations 1946

	Grant Paid 1984-85 £
Centre for Information on Language Teaching	23,763
Royal Zoological Society	13,014
Saltire Society	200
Scottish Parent Teacher Council	10,000
National Association for Gifted Children	800
British Association for Early Childhood Education	200
Scottish Computer Education Group	3,500
Scottish Field Studies Association	4,500
National Bureau for Handicapped Students	500
National Association for Maternal and Child Welfare	500
Scottish Film Council	388,000
Council for Education in World Citizenship	6,289

Grants to List D Schools under Section 107 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937

	Grant Paid 1984-85 £
Kibble	319,809
Rossie	728,362
Wellington	365,991
Geilsland	271,866
Loaningdale	242,581
Springboig	224,527
St. Andrews	91,829
Oakbank	265,643
Kenmure	799,308
St. Josephs	338,522
St. Philips	312,365
Ballikinrain	182,305
Dr. Guthrie's Boys	349,329
Dr. Guthrie's Girls	151,686
Langlands Park	153,864
Balgay	315,787
Balacraig	95,965
Snowdon	147,249

Grants under the Residential Special Schools and Orphanages (Scotland) Grant Regulations 1948

	Grant Paid 1984-85 £
Corseford School	405,151
Stanmore School	460,650
Royal Blind School	530,551
Craigerne School	181,910
Thorntoun School	240,336
Harmeny School	161,055
Lendrick Muir School	302,724
Donaldson's School	286,710
East Park School	747,597
Struan House (Scottish Society for Austic Children)	11,625

Grants paid under section 16B of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 (formerly section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968)

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Scottish Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	99
Scottish Council on Alcoholism	69,300
Family Planning Association	12,500
Community Service Volunteers	12,150
Chest, Heart and Stroke Association	2,750
Action on Smoking and Health	22,990
Scottish National Blood Transfusion Association	3,600
Scottish Council on Disability	18,266
British Association of Immediate Care Schemes (BASICS)	1,450
NSSPCC Overnewton Centre	20,122
Arthritis and Rheumatism Council	9,950
Scottish Association for Mental Health	8,500
Age Concern Scotland	6,273
Toy Libraries Association	2,000
SCOPE in Scotland	12,490
National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital	2,254
Motability	37,579
Overseas Doctors' Association—Scottish Branch	365
Brook Advisory Centre	3,780
National Schizophrenia Fellowship (Scotland)	1,554
Mastectomy Association	310
National Childbirth Trust	1,500
Scottish Epilepsy Association	4,775
National Association for the Childless	2,350
Special Equipment and Aids for Living	2,000
Scottish Paraplegic (spinal injury) association	3,600
SHADA	24,230
Natural Family Planning Group	420
Miscellaneous	70,000
British Red Cross Society Scottish Branch	242
The Leith Group	20,086
Wester Hailes "Hotline" project	22,380

Grants under section 39 of the Road Traffic Act 1972

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents	109,450
Schools Traffic Education Programme	15,481

Grants under section 5 of the Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1978

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Scottish Council for Community and Voluntary Organisations	42,616
Institute of Housing	48,241
Age Concern	21,583
Shelter	26,038
Scottish Women's Aid	750

Grants under section 13 of the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Scottish Council for Single Homeless	24,063
Scottish Women's Aid	3,883
Shelter	14,644

Grants under section 10 of the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
The New Lanark Conservation Trust	19,029

Grants under section 158(2) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1966

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations	2,000

Grants to 102 Housing Societies and Associations

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Under Part VII of the Housing (Scotland) Acts 1950 and 1966	21,275
Under Part VI of the Housing (Financial Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1972	285,725
Under Part III of the Housing Act 1974	127,714,786
Under Section 93 of the Finance Act 1965	405,297

Other Grants

	Grant paid 1984-85 £
Planning Exchange	50,000
Scottish Civic Trust	31,500
Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland	3,500
Saltire Society	2,500

Formation Grants to Fish Producers' Organisation (SI 498/1982)

Organisation	*Grant paid 1984-85* £
Fife Fish Producers' Organisation	1,139
North East of Scotland Fishermen's Organisation	742
Shetland Fish Producers	33,460

Wildlife (Poisons)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many reports of incidents involving the misuse of poisons or stupefying substances on wildlife have been reported to his Department in 1983, 1984 and 1985, to the most recent date for which figures are available; and in how many cases the details were passed to the police for investigation.

Mr. John MacKay: In the years 1983, 1984 and 1985 to date, 44, 24 and 30 reports have been received by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland of incidents where poisons or stupefying substances were misused with the intention of killing wildlife, including cats and dogs. Details of 11, 1 and 4 cases have been reported in the respective years to the police by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland. Information on incidents reported to the police by other persons or bodies is not available.

Housing Associations

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of properties owned by housing associations in Scotland; how many of these properties have been sold to tenants in the last five years for which records are available; and what percentage of the total number the number sold represents.

Mr. Younger: It is estimated that, at 31 March 1985, registered housing associations in Scotland owned some 36,900 properties, of which approximately 28,500 were general needs houses. The number of houses sold to sitting tenants in the five years to that date is shown in the table.

The total sales represent 0·23 per cent. of the total housing stock.

Year	*No. of Sales*
1980-81	nil
1981-82	nil
1982-83	25
1983-84	45
1984-85	13
Total	83

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total Government contribution to the budgets of Scottish housing associations in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Younger: Finance for housing association capital projects is provided initially through short-term lending by the Housing Corporation and through a smaller programme of lending by local authorities. Total capital expenditure by the housing association movement in Scotland in each financial year since 1980-81 is shown in table A.

Table A

Financial Year	*£ million*
1980-81	72·48
1981-82	96·04
1982-83	117·76
1983-84	118·22
1984-85	108·35

The estimated expenditure for 1985-86 is £110·55 million.

As each project reaches completion, the short-term loan is replaced by housing association grant (HAG) and a long-term loan from the Housing Corporation or the local authority. HAG normally meets some 85 per cent. to 90 per cent. of the cost of the project. Total expenditure on housing association grants and payments under the earlier subsidy arrangements by the Government to the housing association movement in Scotland in each financial year since 1980-81 is shown in table B.

Table B

Financial Year	*£ million*
1980-81	50·61
1981-82	82·80
1982-83	104·17
1983-84	115·75
1984-85	127·68

The estimated expenditure for 1985-86 is £114·23 million.

Finally, there is a number of revenue-related grants paid by the Scottish Development Department for which associations may qualify according to their circumstances.

AIDS

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what cash specifically earmarked to each of the haemophiliac reference centres to deal with acquired immunine deficiency syndrome; how much cash is set aside for personal counselling; and if he will make a statement on the contribution of social work services to the reference centres.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985]: Both the haemophiliac reference centres in Scotland are closely involved in work relating to AIDS, but they are not separately funded for any of their functions. Although social work departments are not directly concerned with the work of the centres they are able to contribute their special skills in supporting the families of haemophiliacs.

WALES

Housing Statistics

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the current expenditure in constant terms on repair and

renovation of *(a)* private sector and *(b)* public sector housing in (i) 1978-79 and (ii) the last year for which figures are available expressed (x) in financial terms and (y) as a percentage of local authority current expenditure on housing.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In 1978-79 local authorities' current expenditure on repairs and maintenance of their own stock of housing charged to their housing revenue accounts was £60·8 million at 1984-85 prices, 22·6 per cent. of their total HRA expenditure. In 1984-85, local authorities budgeted to spend £74·0 million, 28·5 per cent. of their total budgeted HRA expenditure.

There was no local authority current expenditure directly on repair and renovation of private sector housing in either year.

Mr. Keith Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the capital expenditure in constant terms on repair and renovation of *(a)* private sector and *(b)* public sector housing in (i) 1978-79 and (ii) the last year for which figures are available expressed (x) in financial terms and (y) as a percentage of local authority capital expenditure on housing.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Local authorities' capital expenditure on the repair and renovation of private sector dwellings in 1978-79 was £19·5 million at 1984-85 prices. This was 10·3 per cent. of their total gross capital expenditure on housing in that year. In 1984-85 the equivalent figures were £85·3 million and 50·1 per cent.

Capital expenditure by local authorities on repair and renovation of their own dwellings was £27·3 million. In 1978-79 at 1984-85 prices, 14·4 per cent. of their total gross capital expenditure on housing. In 1984-85 the equivalent figures were £45·2 million and 26·6 per cent.

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will seek to ensure that a statutory responsibility is placed on local social services departments to ensure that mentally handicapped young people are found homes in the community rather than in long-stay institutions, whether these are in the public or private sector.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There is a need for a range of provision for mentally handicapped young people in the community and county council social services departments, in close co-operation with district health authorities, district councils, voluntary organisations, parents and other representatives of mentally handicapped people are currently developing such provisions through the medium comprehensive county plans to be funded under the all-Wales mental handicap strategy. I am satisfied that this is the most appropriate way forward and that new statutory powers are unnecessary.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what applications he has received for funds, and for what purposes, under the All Wales Strategy for Mentally Handicapped Adults and Children from *(a)* Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin and *(b)* the Pre-School Playgroups Association; what his reponse has been to these applications; and if he will make a statement elaborating on his decisions.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin submitted two unsuccessful applications in respect of the appointment of development and liaison officers to assess needs. The Pre-School Playgroups association submitted two successful applications for a playgroup referral scheme in Clwyd and a special liaison officer to co-ordinate activities in counties. Funding of projects under the strategy is approved largely in accordance with comprehensive county plans co-ordinated by social services departments. Voluntary organisations are encouraged to join local planning teams. In a few cases, including the PPA referral scheme, funding under the strategy was provided directly by the Department through a programme to launch the strategy in its first year. Central funding has also applied in cases where there has been an all-Wales element in the proposals. Each application is considered on its merits and we reached the view that, unlike the PPA projects, the MYM proposals were not based on proven groundwork previously undertaken in the counties.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if separate figures are yet available for the numbers of children in long-stay mental handicap hospitals in each district health authority and in each regional health authority in Wales; and for each authority, what are the numbers living in units of *(a)* 25 or more beds, and *(b)* under 25 beds.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The following table shows, for each district health authority, the numbers of persons aged under 16 years who were resident in mental handicap hospitals and units with fewer than 25 beds on 5 April 1985, the latest date for which information is available. There were no persons aged under 16 years resident in mental handicap hospitals and units with 25 or more beds.

Number of residents aged under 16 years in mental handicap hospitals and units of fewer than 25 staffed available beds

District health authority	*Number*
Clwyd	7
East Dyfed	9
Pembrokeshire	5
Gwent	5
Gwynedd	7
Mid Glamorgan	6
Powys	1
South Glamorgan	3
West Glamorgan	—

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will renew for a further three years the grant to maintain the current project for the preparation of books, teaching materials and resources for Welsh language secondary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Proposals are being considered but no decision has yet been taken about commissioning further work in preparing Welsh medium materials for schools.

Commission for Racial Equality

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether the Welsh Office have a permanent representative on the Welsh consultative committee of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to him on 24 October 1985 at column *200*.

National Trust (Coastal Heritage)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the National Trust coastal heritage project and his Department's involvement in it.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I welcome the efforts of the National Trust to preserve our coastal heritage. The administration of its operation is a matter for the trust and our Department has no direct involvement.

Amenity Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health district the numbers of amenity beds, discharges and deaths, average daily occupied beds and percentage occupancy in 1983 and 1984 and the income from amenity patients.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:—

	*Number of amenity beds**		*Discharges and deaths*		*Average daily occupied beds*		*Percentage occupancy*		*Income from amenity patients £000*	
	1983	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*	*1983/4*	*1984/5*
Clwyd	15	15	95	61	1·82	1·87	12·1	12·4	224	251
East Dyfed	17	17	32	31	0·68	0·48	4·0	2·8	85	130
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd	15	13	19	7	0·32	0·22	2·1	1·7	103	92
Mid Glamorgan	10	10	18	13	0·26	0·14	2·6	1·5	25	11
Powys	10	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	3	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	22
West Glamorgan	11	11	20	14	0·18	0·18	1·6	1·7	32	33
Pembrokeshire	6	6	18	9	0·14	0·03	2·3	0·5	38	47

* At 31 December.

NHS (Services)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1979 the percentage of the expenditure on *(a)* medical and surgical equipment maintenance, *(b)* X-ray equipment maintenance, *(c)* laboratory equipment maintenance, *(d)* catering, *(e)* laundry, *(f)* cleaning, *(g)* engineering maintenance, *(h)* building maintenance, *(i)* grounds etc. maintenance, *(j)* vehicle maintenance and *(k)* computers, which has been paid to private contractors for services provided to the National Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

Payment to private contractors as a percentage of relevant expenditure

Per cent.

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Medical and surgical equipment maintenance	5·14	5·57	5·76	6·25	5·77	4·69
X-ray equipment maintenance	35·98	41·27	44·97	51·40	52·14	55·19
Laboratory equipment maintenance	4·85	8·40	9·60	11·06	8·78	9·98
Catering	0·013	0·011	0·047	0·013	0·013	0·014
Laundry	3·79	5·45	2·64	6·81	*8·25	5·69
Cleaning	0·64	0·68	0·72	0·69	0·64	0·68
Engineering maintenance	14·86	13·22	14·04	14·56	12·98	11·44
Building maintenance	24·06	19·99	29·19	37·59	24·51	22·97
Grounds (etc.) maintenance	2·13	2·21	3·16	4·89	4·72	5·22
Vehicle maintenance	18·93	16·77	13·39	13·42	19·59	14·91
Computers	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18·80	21·16

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities.

Notes:

1. All figures are for current expenditure: capital is excluded.
2. Information in the table has been prepared on as consistent a basis as practicable but comparisons of percentages between services may in some cases be misleading as the basis of the total relevant expenditure figures for different services are not completely uniform.
3. There is no centrally available information on the expenditure on external contracts for computers prior to 1983-84.

* A fire in the central laundry in E. Dyfed led to some additional external contracts in 1983-84. This central laundry has since been repaired and re-opened.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health district in 1984-85 the total expenditure on cleaning, the expenditure on services provided by private cleaning companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former, and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

Domestic and cleaning services	Total expenditure 1984-85 £000	External contracts 1984-85 £000	External contracts as a percentage of total expenditure	Difference between percentage for 1984-85 and percentage for 1983-84
Clwyd	3,106	15	0·49	−0·04
East Dyfed	2,074	14	0·68	−0·19
Gwent	4,360	26	0·60	+0·13
Gwynedd	1,990	9	0·42	−0·03
Mid Glamorgan	4,993	23	0·46	—
Pembrokeshire	657	2	0·30	−0·48
Powys	973	3	0·30	+0·06
South Glamorgan	4,823	59	1·22	+0·04
West Glamorgan	3,318	11	0·33	−0·01
WHTSO	33	17	51·32	+35·62
Wales	26,327	179	0·68	+0·04

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each tendering exercise for hospital ancillary services of which his Department, is aware *(a)* the health authority concerned, *(b)* the hospital concerned, *(c)* the service concerned (laundry, catering or cleaning), *(d)* the successful tenderer and *(e)* the saving achieved over the past in the previous year.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is as follows:

Health Authority	Hospital or other premises	Service	Successful tenderer
Welsh health common services authority	Offices	Domestic	Central cleaning services
Pembrokeshire	Whole district	Domestic	In-house
	Whole district	Catering	In-house
	Whole district	Laundry	ICS initial
Powys	Machynlleth Chest hospital	Domestic	In-house
	Machynlleth district health centre		
	Builth Wells cottage hospital	Domestic	In-house
	Builth Wells health centre		
	Llanwrtyd Wells health centre		
	Llandrindod Wells hospital		
	"Hazels" clinic		
	Rhayader health clinic		
	Knighton hospital		
	Knighton health clinic		
	Presteigne health clinic		
	Ystradgynlais Community hospital	Catering	In-house
West Glamorgan	Whole district	Laundry	In-house

The resultant savings should amount to some £550,000.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health district in 1984-85 the total expenditure on laundry, the expenditure on services provided by private laundry companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

Laundry Expenditure	Total Expenditure 1984-85 £000	External contracts 1984-85 £000	External contracts as percentage of total laundry	Difference between percentage for 1984-85 and percentage for 1983-84
Clwyd	400	12	3·11	−1·29
East Dyfed	370	3	0·68	*−12·15
Gwent	497	12	2·36	−0·62
Gwynedd	235	3	1·12	−0·25
Mid Glamorgan	737	13	1·81	+0·97
Pembrokeshire	138	138	100·00	+0·87
Powys	145	6	4·00	+1·03
South Glamorgan	564	6	1·10	+0·99
West Glamorgan	590	16	2·78	+1·36
WHTSO	—	—	—	—
Wales	3,676	209	5·69	*−2·56

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities.
* A fire in the central laundry in East Dyfed led to some additional external contracts in 1983-84. This central laundry has since been repaired and re-opened.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health district in 1984-85 the total expenditure on catering, the expenditure on services provided by private catering companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former, and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

Catering expenditure	*Total expenditure 1984-85*	*External contracts 1984-85*	*External contracts at per centage of total catering*	*Difference between per centage for 1984-85 and per-centage for 1983-84*
	£000	*£000*		
Clwyd	3,127	1	0·017	+0·002
E Dyfed	1,965	Nil	Nil	Nil
Gwent	3,997	Nil	Nil	Nil
Gwynedd	1,936	Nil	Nil	Nil
Mid Glamorgan	4,794	0	0·001	−0·006
Pembrokeshire	458	Nil	Nil	Nil
Powys	1,080	Nil	Nil	Nil
South Glamorgan	4,524	3	0·063	+0·011
West Glamorgan	2,554	Nil	Nil	Nil
WHTSO	23	Nil	Nil	Nil
Wales	24,458	4	0·014	+0·001

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities.
Note: Minimal expenditure (ie. less than £500) is indicated by the use of 0.

Private Practice

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1979 the number of ambulance service journeys in Wales carrying non-National Health Service patients and the total mileage involved.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available in terms of ambulance service journeys. The following table gives the numbers of non-NHS patient journeys and the total mileage involved.

Year	*Number of non-NHS patient journeys**	*Total mileage for non-NHS patient journeys*
1979	3,094	34,024
1980	2,500	33,367
1981	1,337	25,576
1982	1,278	23,265
1983	947	17,522
1984	214	†

* One patient carried once in one direction is defined as one patient journey. A patient taken to a hospital and later in the same day taken home again counts as 2 patient journeys. If 2 or more patients are carried in one ambulance then they are defined as 2 or more patient journeys.
† Data no longer collected.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the private hospitals and nursing homes in Wales which treat National Health Service patients under contractual arrangements with health authorities.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the private hospitals and nursing homes in Wales which treated NHS patients under contractual arrangements with Welsh district health authorities in 1984 are given below:

Maes Mynnan nursing home, Nr. Mold, Clwyd
Convent of Mercy, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd
Ty Gwyn residential home, Nr. Abergavenny, Gwent
Plymouth nursing home, Penarth, South Glamorgan
Ty Gwyn nursing home, Penarth, South Glamorgan
New Ravensworth, Neath, West Glamorgan

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1979 for each health authority and for Wales as a whole the number of deaths and discharges among, and the number of beds occupied on a given date by, patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service, breaking the figures down by category of patient treated.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The available information is set out in the following table:

Patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements
Columns (a) = Discharges and deaths. Columns (b) Occupied beds at 31 December.

	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984	
	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)
Clwyd:												
Convalescent	213	7	224	10	240	8	212	7	170	5	136	4
East Dyfed:	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire:	Part of Dyfed health authority											
Gwent:												
Medical	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
Mental illness	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Others	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	1
Gwynedd:												
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	1	—
Terminal care	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—
Total	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	1	3	—
Mid Glamorgan:												
Mental illness	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
Mental handicap	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Total	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
Powys:												
Medical	35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Convalescent	—	—	36	1	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	35	—	36	1	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan:												
Convalescent	—	—	—	—	—	—	13	—	—	—	—	—
Geriatrics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	—	5	—
Terminal care	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	1	1	—
Others	5	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	5	—	—	—	2	—	14	1	19	1	6	—
West Glamorgan:	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wales:												
Medical	35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
Convalescent	213	7	260	11	260	8	225	7	170	5	136	4
Geriatrics	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	—	5	—
Mental illness	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—
Mental handicap	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Rehabilitation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	1	1	1
Terminal care	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	2	3	—
Others	5	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	253	7	261	11	262	8	226	8	200	11	147	5

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each health authority and for 1983 and 1984 *(a)* the number of pay beds, *(b)* the number of discharges and deaths of private patients, *(c)* the average number of pay beds occupied by private patients and *(d)* the percentage occupancy.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

Pay beds and private patients 1983 and 1984

	Clwyd	East Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Pembrokeshire
1983									
Number of pay beds*	12	7	1	8	3	—	13	2	3
Discharges and deaths of private patients	554	213	—	203	46	—	47	108	100
Average number of pay beds occupied daily	6·37	2·77	—	2·61	0·89	—	0·07	0·86	0·30
Percentage occupancy	53·10	39·60	—	32·60	29·70	—	0·50	43·00	10·00
1984									
Number of pay beds*	12	7	1	8	3	—	13	3	3
Discharges and deaths of private patients	602	246	—	186	46	—	56	104	75

	Ceryd	East Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Pembrokeshire
Average number of pay beds occupied daily	6·76	3·73	—	1·03	0·33	—	0·68	0·76	0·24
Percentage occupancy	56·30	53·30	—	12·90	11·00	—	5·20	15·20	8·00

* At 31 December.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each year since 1970 and for each health authority the number of attendances by *(a)* private out-patients, *(b)* private day cases and *(c)* private regular day cases.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table. Comparable figures are not available for the years prior to 1973.

Private patients 1973-84

	Ceryd	Dyfed-East Dyfed*	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Pembs.*
1973									
Out-patients	—	393	—	23	117	—	—	—	n/a
Day cases	11	145	4	61	175	—	—	—	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1974									
Out-patients	—	327	—	19	78	—	—	—	n/a
Day cases	39	126	—	68	146	—	—	—	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1975									
Out-patients	1	383	—	18	125	9	—	—	n/a
Day cases	13	201	2	48	171	—	—	—	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1976									
Out-patients	—	559	—	26	135	6	—	—	n/a
Day cases	22	162	—	17	113	—	—	124	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1977									
Out-patients	—	656	—	20	20	2	—	—	n/a
Day cases	29	142	—	61	73	—	—	151	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1978									
Out-patients	33	456	—	2	1	—	—	5	n/a
Day cases	73	131	—	68	31	—	—	160	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1979									
Out-patients	15	499	—	1	6	—	—	7	n/a
Day cases	86	150	—	101	39	—	—	252	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1980									
Out-patients	14	796	—	14	12	—	—	14	n/a
Day cases	67	285	—	101	35	—	—	204	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1981									
Out-patients	36	847	—	8	—	—	—	117	n/a
Day cases	89	347	—	84	44	—	—	304	n/a
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a
1982									
Out-patients	66	795	—	10	16	—	76	142	87
Day cases	84	327	—	97	25	—	5	361	34
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1983									
Out-patients	99	1,131	—	15	63	—	290	133	249
Day cases	135	274	—	95	21	—	1	323	55
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	Clwyd	Dyfed-East Dyfed*	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	Pembs.*
1984									
Out-patients	1,405	1,329	—	16	269	—	484	221	368
Day cases	244	268	—	70	62	—	6	355	44
Regular day patients	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

* Pembrokeshire figures are included with Dyfed prior to 1982.

Health Authorities

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for each year since 1970 and for each health authority, the total number of consultants holding *(a)* full-time, *(b)* maximum part-time, *(c)* other part-time and *(d)* honorary contracts.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information for 1980-84 is given below. Comparable figures for earlier years can be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

**Numbers of consultants*

	Clwyd	Dyfed/ East dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glamorgan	Powys	South Glamorgan	West Glamorgan	†Pembs
1980:									
Full-time	64	57	50	34	73	10	76	57	..
Maximum part-time	27	14	41	15	28	3	46	37	..
Other part-time	3	—	1	1	—	3	1	1	..
Honorary	2	1	—	—	1	1	75	2	..
1981:									
Full-time	67	61	55	35	74	7	83	58	..
Maximum part-time	25	12	40	15	26	5	44	37	..
Other part-time	4	—	2	1	—	3	1	—	..
Honorary	2	—	—	—	1	1	82	1	..
1982:									
Full-time	67	51	60	36	82	8	90	62	16
Maximum part-time	26	9	38	15	25	4	43	37	2
Other part-time	5	1	2	1	—	2	1	1	—
Honorary	2	—	—	—	1	1	83	—	—
1983:									
Full-time	77	57	70	36	88	8	91	64	14
Maximum part-time	26	6	38	16	24	6	42	38	2
Other part-time	6	1	2	1	—	1	2	—	—
Honorary	2	—	—	—	1	1	82	—	—
1984:									
Full-time	75	59	69	37	93	8	97	66	19
Maximum part-time	16	8	37	23	25	7	38	35	2
Other part-time	9	1	4	1	—	1	2	—	—
Honorary	1	—	—	—	2	1	84	1	—

* Including all medical and dental consultants in the hospital and community service. Consultants who work for more than one authority are included only in the figures for the authority in which the majority of their sessions are worked.
† Pembrokeshire figures are included with Dyfed prior to 1982.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each health authority, the income from *(a)* private resident patients and *(b)* private non-resident patients.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:—

(a) Income from private resident patients

	1979-80 £000s	1980-81 £000s	1981-82 £000s	1982-83 £000s	1983-84 £000s	1984-85 £000s
Clwyd	114	162	184	132	224	251
East Dyfed*	60	107	112	103	85	130
Pembrokeshire*				36	38	47
Gwent	3	2	1	—	—	—
Gwynedd	68	96	96	93	103	92
Mid Glamorgan	11	12	20	9	25	11
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	41	26	17	26	19	22
West Glamorgan	7	11	21	19	32	33
Wales	304	416	451	418	526	586

(b) Income from private non-resident patients

	1979-80 £000s	1980-81 £000s	1981-82 £000s	1982-83 £000s	1983-84 £000s	1984-85 £000s
Clwyd	6	8	18	24	28	54
East Dyfed*	3	4	5	4	6	9
Pembrokeshire*				4	8	12
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—	7
Gwynedd	2	3	4	5	3	6
Mid Glamorgan	1	2	2	2	5	10
Powys	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	1	—	1	4	7	23
West Glamorgan	6	8	13	16	15	26
Wales	19	25	43	59	72	147

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities.
* Prior to 1982-83 the Dyfed area health authority covered the whole county.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for each year since 1979, the health authorities in Wales for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient in-care.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The health authorities concerned are as follows:

1980	1981-83	1984	1985
—	—	Clwyd	Clwyd
—	—	East Dyfed	East Dyfed
—	—	Gwent	Gwent
—	—	Gwynedd	Gwynedd
—	—	Mid Glamorgan	Mid Glamorgan
—	—	Pembrokeshire	Pembrokeshire
—	—	Powys	—
South Glamorgan	—	South Glamorgan	South Glamorgan
—	—	West Glamorgan	—

Notes:

1. The NHS auditor for Wales was directed, in 1984, to conduct an all-Wales review of the management of private medical practice arising from concern regarding the management of private medical practice at Prince Charles hospital, Merthyr Tydfil (and at Good Hope hospital, Sutton Coldfield).

2. The 1985 auditors reports have not yet been circulated to health authorities.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give, for each health authority and for Wales as a whole, the expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care in each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care

£000s

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Clwyd	20	26	83	60	42	19
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	72	—	2
Gwent	5	3	—	—	28	26
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	32	43	36	40	22	12
Powys	31	34	8	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	2	2	2	4	4	48
West Glamorgan	8	20	21	27	29	18
Wales	98	128	150	203	125	125

Source: The annual accounts of health authorities.
Note: Prior to 1982-83 the Dyfed area health authority covered the whole county.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* health visitors, *(b)* community nurses, and *(c)* physiotherapists have been employed in each Welsh health authority for each of the years 1979 to 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information* for 1979-84 is given below; corresponding figures for 1985 are not yet available.

Year	Health visitors	Community nurses†	Physiotherapists
1979	517	1,882	354
1980	536	1,997	369
1981	553	2,014	357
1982	575	2,075	356
1983	579	1,982	424
1984	587	2,106	441

* Whole-time equivalent at 30 September.
† Excluding health visitors and school health service.

Private Hospital Developments

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals for private hospital developments have been notified to or authorised by him under the Health Services Act 1976 as amended by the Health Service Act 1980 since 1 May.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Since 1 May 1985 we have received the following notification:—

Clwyd county council—30 beds

There have been no requests for authorisation of controlled private hospital works.

Welsh Language

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will establish a unit within his Department with specific responsibility for all matters relating to the Welsh language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: At ministerial level I assist my right hon. Friend in Welsh language matters. At official level a co-ordinating responsibility is exercised by the Welsh Office education department. I have no plans for changing these arrangements.

Retirement Homes (Staff)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of people working in retirement homes in Wales are qualified nursing staff; and what was the proportion in 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is not available.

Community Nurses

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many community nurses there are per 1,000 people aged 75 years and over; and how many proportionately there have been in each year from 1979 to 1984.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:—

Year	*Community nurses* per 1,000 population aged 75 years and over*
1979	14·7
1980	15·1
1981	14·9
1982	15·1
1983	14·2
1984	14·6

* Whole-time equivalents at 30 September.

Sheltered Accommodation

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the ratio of places available in sheltered accommodation in Wales per 1,000 people aged 65 years and over, for each year from 1979 to 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The number of places available for the elderly in local authority and housing association sheltered accommodation, per 1,000 persons aged 65 and over in Wales is estimated as follows for the years 1983-85.

Number of places per 1,000 over 65

Year	*Number*
1983	34·9
1984	36·8
1985	38·6

Similar information is not available for the private sector or for years prior to 1983.

Home Helps

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of whole-time equivalent home helps in each Welsh county; and, in those counties where there is a shortfall under the recommended level of provision, if he will publish the actual number of home helps estimated to be required to offset the shortfall.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The numbers of whole-time equivalent home helps in each Welsh county at 30 September 1984, are given in the table below:

Number of home helps (whole-time equivalent) at 30 September 1984

Local authority	*Number*
Clwyd	348·0
Dyfed	335·0
Gwent	623·3
Gwynedd	270·0
Mid Glamorgan	849·0
Powys	113·8
South Glamorgan	421·0
West Glamorgan	503·2

Assessments of need and decisions on levels of service to be provided are both matters for determination locally.

Health Visitors

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many visits were carried out by health visitors in Wales in each year from 1978 to 1984, inclusive, to people aged 65 years and over.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

Number of visits carried out by health visitors in Wales to people aged 65 years and over

Year	*Number*
1978	44,455
1979	43,174
1980	42,315
1981	38,726
1982	37,886
1983	32,725
1984	32,072

Surgeons

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the average number of hours per week worked by a surgeon employed by the National Health Service in the fields of ear nose and throat, gynaecology, and general surgery, respectively.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information for Wales is as follows—

*Average hours per week worked by consultant surgeon**

Specialty	Hours
Ear, nose and throat	36·1
Gynaecology and obstetrics†	34·4
General surgery	35·1

* Based on contract hours at 30 September 1984.
† Gynaecology cannot be identified separately from obstetrics.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the average work load, on a weekly basis, of surgeons now employed by the National Health Service in the specialties of ear nose and throat, gynaecology, and general surgery; and how many of these are day cases.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There is no single meaaure of surgeons' work load. The care of in-patients, out-patients and day cases each contributes to surgeons' activity. The latest available information for Wales for each of these is as follows:—

*Average Weekly Number Per Consultant Surgeon**

	In-patient Cases ‡	Day case attendances	Out-patient attendances
Ear, nose and throat	16·5	1·4	111·8
Gynaecology and obstetrics†	40·4	1·6	147·2
General Surgery	24·8	4·2	72·2

* Based on cases for year ending December 1984 and consultants employed at 30 September 1984.
† Gynaecology cannot be identified separately from obstetrics.
‡ Discharges and deaths.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if there are any plans to employ more surgeons in the specialties of ear nose and throat, gynaecology, and general surgery within the National Health Service, and specifically in the Mid Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There are no manpower restrictions on the appointment of more consultants in these specialties. District health authorities in Wales already have approval for three new posts in general surgery, two in ear, nose and throat, and four in obstetrics and gynaecology. In Mid Glamorgan, the appointment of an obtetrician and gynaecologist has recently been made, and an advertisement placed for a general surgeon.

Mid Glamorgan Health Authority

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to seek to reduce the waiting lists for surgery in the fields of ear nose and throat, gynaecology, and general surgery, in the Mid Glamorgan health district; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The day-to-day management of the Health Service is primarily the responsibility of the district health authority. Nevertheless I am concerned to reduce waiting times, which are affected by a number of factors, and the Department is pursuing this matter with the NHS in Wales.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of surgeons employed in the specialities of ear nose and throat, gynaecology, and general surgery, respectively, in the Mid Glamorgan health authority.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is as follows:

Mid Glamorgan Health Authority

Specialty	Consultant surgeons* Number	Whole-time equivalents
Ear, nose and throat	4	3·91
Gynaecology and obstetrics†	9	8·55
General surgery	10	8·73

* At 30 September 1984.
† Gynaecology cannot be identified separately from obstetrics.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Privatisation

Mr. Knox asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the receipts to the Treasury from privatisation have been in each financial year since 1979-80; and what he anticipates the receipts will be in each of the next five financial years, in cash terms and at constant prices.

Mr. Moore: Proceeds treated as special sales of assets, including the planning figures for 1985-86 and subsequent years, are set out in cash terms:

(£ million)

1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
370	405	494	488	1,142

(£ million)

1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
2,091	2,500	4,750	4,750	4,750

No planning figure has been decided for years after 1988-89. Using the assumptions for the GDP deflator given in footnote 2 to table 2.1 of the Autumn Statement, the planning figures for special sales of assets expressed in 1984-85 price levels are as follows:

(£ million)

1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
2,381	4,329	4,183	4,061

Bank of England

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) in what circumstances the Bank of England comments on its financial relationships with individual banking institutions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to answer questions on commitments or guarantees of, or relating to, public money by the Bank of England in support of financial institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: It is for the Bank of England to determine its policy on answering questions concerning its relationships with financial institutions where these relationships rely on the bank's own resources. The bank is constrained by considerations of customer confidentiality and by the confidentiality requirements of the Banking Act 1979.

Written Answers ("Official Report")

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that statistical information on

public expenditure should be presented in written answers published in the *Official Report* in diagrammatic form, including graphs, bar graphs and pie charts in the same way as they are published in the public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Brooke: The form of reporting in *Hansard* is ultimately for the House to decide but, on grounds of cost and risk of delay to publication, I would not at present want to propose publishing written answers in diagrammatic form.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he knew of allegations concerning fraud in relation to Johnson Matthey Bankers as regards members of the Pahoomal family when he made his statement to the House on Johnson Matthey Bankers on 20 June.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Files

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements operate for the logging of those who have access to *(a)* computer and *(b)* manual files kept by his Department on individuals; and if he will describe the procedures in operation for both categories.

Mr. Tom King: There are specific guidelines on security of automatically processed data in Government Departments. These are contained in "Protection of Information in Computer Systems" and "Central Government Code of Practice No 27" issued by the central computer and telecommunications agency and these guidelines have been accepted by Northern Ireland Departments.

Manual files are retained in central and divisional registries within Departments. When a person who is authorised to do so examines or withdraws such a file his or her name is recorded in the appropriate registry index and on the file cover.

Tendering Exercises

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give for each tendering exercise for hospital ancillary services of which his Department is aware *(a)* the health and social service board concerned, *(b)* the hospital concerned, *(c)* the service concerned (laundry, catering or cleaning), *(d)* the successful tenderers and *(e)* the saving achieved over the cost in the previous year.

Mr. Needham: The health boards complement some in-house cleaning and laundry services by private contracting but the information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The boards are now examining the feasibility of full services being provided commercially.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1970 and for each health and social services board, the number of attendances by *(a)* private outpatients, *(b)* private day cases and *(c)* private regular day cases.

Mr. Needham: This information could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each health and social services board in 1984-85, the total expenditure on hospital catering, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private catering companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Health and social services board	*Total expenditure in 1984-85 on hospital catering*	*Expenditure in 1984-85 on services provided by private catering companies*		*Difference between 1983-84 percentage and 1984-85 percentage*
	£	£	*per cent of Total*	
Northern	2,615,354	Nil	0	Nil
Southern	2,983,107	Nil	0	Nil
Eastern	11,735,830	Nil	0	Nil
Western	3,458,147	Nil	0	Nil
All boards	20,792,438	Nil	0	Nil

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each health and social services board in 1984-85, the total expenditure on hospital laundry, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private laundry companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Health and social services board	Total expenditure in 1984-85 on hospital laundry	Expenditure in 1984-85 on services provided by private laundry companies		Difference between 1983-84 percentage and 1984-85 percentage
	£	£	per cent of Total	
Northern	1,096,330	242,869	22·15	−3·38
Southern	1,131,170	Nil	0	Nil
Eastern	3,301,521	54,296	1·64	+·55
Western	871,516	25,375	2·91	+1·13
All boards	6,400,537	322,540	5·04	+·18

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each health and social services board in 1984-85, the total expenditure on hospital cleaning, the total expenditure on services provided to hospitals by private cleaning companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Health and social services board	Total expenditure in 1984-85 on hospital cleaning	Expenditure in 1984-85 on services provided by private cleaning companies		Diference between 1983-84 percentage and 1984-85 percentage
	£	£	per cent of Total	
Northern	2,164,328	12,089	·55	+·06
Southern	2,505,472	17,000	·68	−·02
Eastern	7,857,740	108,848	1·38	+·5
Western	2,501,986	27,927	1·1	+·6
All boards	15,029,526	165,864	1·1	+·37

NHS (Private Contractors)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1979, the percentage of the expenditure on *(a)* medical and surgical equipment maintenance, *(b)* X-ray equipment maintenance, *(c)* laboratory equipment maintenance, *(d)* catering, *(e)* laundry, *(f)* cleaning, *(g)* engineering maintenance, *(h)* building maintenance, *(i)* grounds, and so on, maintenance, *(j)* vehicle maintenance and *(k)* computers, which has been paid to private contractors for services provided to the National Health Service in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: The final accounts of health and social services boards do not currently distinguish expenditure on services provided by private contractors and the information requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the private hospitals and nursing homes in Northern Ireland which treat National Health Service patients under contractual arrangements.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Alexian Brothers house, Warrenpoint.
Belfast charitable society, Clifton house.
Marie Curie foundation, Beaconfield.
St. John of God, Newry.
Ulster Volunteer Force hospital.

Ambulance Service Journeys

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1979, the number of ambulance service journeys in Northern Ireland carrying non-National Health Service patients and the total mileage involved.

Mr. Needham: This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Patient Care (Expenditure)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole, the expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care in each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care

Financial year	Northern board £	Southern board £	Eastern board £	Western board £	Northern Ireland Total £
1979-80	2,889	91,236	844,127	3,817	942,069
1980-81	3,401	111,512	1,100,564	2,395	1,217,872
1981-82	1,581	102,231	1,065,314	4,695	1,173,821

Financial year	Northern board £	Southern board £	Eastern board £	Western board £	Northern Ireland Total £
1982-83	2,679	73,281	1,187,942	22,937	1,286,839
1983-84	2,580	110,000	1,509,529	Nil	1,622,109
1984-85	2,649	121,588	1,610,314	Nil	1,734,551

Private Patients

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for each year since 1979, the health and social services boards for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient income.

Mr. Needham: None.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each health and social services board for 1984 *(a)* the total number of private inpatients who may be accommodated, *(b)* the average daily occupancy of those beds by private patients and *(c)* the average occupancy rate percentage; and if he will give the 1983 figures for comparison.

Mr. Needham: The details are as follows:

Private In-patient Provision

	Total number of patients who may be accommodated*	Average daily number of paying patients occupying those beds	Average occupancy rate per cent.
Eastern health and social services board			
1984	90	16·7	18·5
1983	90	15·7	17·4
Northern health and social services board			
1984	22	3·2	14·5
1983	22	3·3	15·0
Southern health and social services board			
1984	14	2·2	15·7
1983	14	1·6	11·4
Western health and social services board			
1984	23	2·5	10·9
1983	23	5·5	23·9

* These beds when not occupied by private patients are used for health service patients.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1979 and for each health and social services board *(a)* the income from private resident patients, *(b)* the amount written off as bad debts from private resident patients, *(c)* the income from private non-resident patients and *(d)* the amount written off as bad debts from private non-resident patients.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:—

Financial year	Northern Board	Southern Board	Eastern Board	Western Board
(a) Income from private resident patients (£)				
1979-80	39,115	31,567	435,542	35,746
1980-81	45,056	24,594	315,967	63,496
1981-82	68,534	41,666	386,380	83,353
1982-83	88,788	58,242	558,213	84,424
1983-84	112,220	84,854	704,978	112,336
1984-85	118,832	84,884	805,335	112,255
(b) Amount written off as bad debts from private resident patients (£)				
1979-80	Nil	Nil	1,284	Nil
1980-81	Nil	134	56	Nil
1981-82	Nil	Nil	291	Nil
1982-83	Nil	Nil	2,398	Nil
1983-84	Nil	Nil	363	Nil
1984-85	Nil	Nil	3,038	Nil
(c) Income from private non-resident patients (£)				
1979-80	623	92	5,223	39
1980-81	699	588	14,798	229
1981-82	4,092	455	10,349	1,168
1982-83	2,795	669	12,536	1,166
1983-84	1,624	2,050	16,871	1,403
1984-85	2,675	2,793	21,999	3,412
(d) Amount written off as bad debts from private non-resident patients (£)				
1979-80	Nil	Nil	46	30
1980-81	Nil	305	30	49
1981-82	4	Nil	88	Nil
1982-83	Nil	92	Nil	Nil
1983-84	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
1984-85	Nil	Nil	1	Nil

Patient Statistics

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1979, for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland as a whole, the number of deaths and discharges among, and the number of beds occupied on a given date by, patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service, breaking the figures down by category of patient treated.

Mr. Needham: This information could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

NHS Consultants

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each year since 1970 and for each health and social services board, the total number of National Health Service consultants holding *(a)* full-time, *(b)* maximum part-time, *(c)* other part-time and *(d)* honorary contracts.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the attached tables. It should be noted that:

(i) it is not possible to give an accurate breakdown between maximum and other part-time consultants;

(ii) only total figures for Northern Ireland as a whole are available for the years prior to the creation of the health and social services boards;

(iii) in Great Britain clinical teaching staff hold honorary Health Service appointments, in Nothern Ireland they are appointed jointly by the University and the health and social services board. The numbers of joint appointments are shown in the tables;

(iv) consultants whose sessions are split between different boards are shown under the one with which their major involvement lies;

(v) dental consultants and community physicians are included.

Health Services Consultants

Year and Board	*Full time*	*Part time*	*Joint appoint-ment*	*Totals*
1970	178	219		397
1971	195	217		412
1972	227	206		433
1973	235	202		437
1974				
Eastern	143	159		302
Northern	40	20		60
Southern	27	19		46
Western	36	9		45
Totals	246	207		453
1975				
Eastern	150	160		310
Northern	46	17		63
Southern	32	19		51
Western	39	8		47
Totals	267	204		471
1976				
Eastern	160	111	45	316
Northern	44	16		60
Southern	36	16		52
Western	40	9		49
Totals	280	152	45	477
1977				
Eastern	159	109	47	315
Northern	42	14	1	57
Southern	38	14		52
Western	41	9		50
Totals	280	146	48	474
1975				
Eastern	176	106	53	335
Northern	44	14	1	59
Southern	40	13		53
Western	44	10		54
Totals	304	143	54	501
1979				
Eastern	179	100	60	339
Northern	48	13	1	62
Southern	40	14		54
Western	48	6		54
Totals	315	133	61	509
1980				
Eastern	184	103	65	352
Northern	50	10	1	61
Southern	45	7		52
Western	49	7		56
Totals	328	127	66	521
1981				
Eastern	196	100	63	359
Northern	55	6	1	62
Southern	44	7		51
Western	51	6		57
Totals	346	119	64	529
1982				
Eastern	201	99	68	368
Northern	61	4	1	66
Southern	46	6		52
Western	51	6		57
Totals	359	115	69	543
1983				
Eastern	204	87	76	367
Northern	60	4	1	65
Southern	54	4		58
Western	55	8		63
Totals	373	103	77	553
1984				
Eastern	200	101	72	373
Northern	60	4	1	65
Southern	53	6		59
Western	53	10		63
Totals	366	121	73	560
1985				
Eastern	210	91	81	382
Northern	66	4	1	71
Southern	55	3		58
Western	54	10		64
Totals	385	108	82	575

Amenity Beds

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give, for each health and social services board *(a)* the number of amenity beds, *(b)* the number of deaths and discharges from amenity beds, *(c)* the number of amenity beds occupied on average, *(d)* the percentage occupancy rate and *(e)* the income from amenity patients in 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Needham: Beds are not specifically designated for amenity purposes and information in the form requested could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However the average daily number of amenity patients in 1984 was:

	Number
Eastern board	8·4
Northern board	7·3
Southern board	0·9
Western board	1·0

Income from amenity patients in the 1983-84 and 1984-85 financial years was:

	1983-84 £	1984-85 £
Eastern board	31,326	30,485
Northern board	12,647	24,815
Southern board	130	440
Western board	3,390	3,750
TOTAL	47,493	59,490

European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give an estimate of the reduction in estimated payment made in the current year by his Department and, where they apply, the consequent savings to the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund resulting from farmers' inability because of this summer's weather to carry out planned improvement work under each of the following schemes: *(a)* agriculture and horticulture development scheme, *(b)* agriculture and horticulture grant scheme, *(c)* Northern Ireland agriculture development programme and *(d)* grassland scheme; and if he will detail any other estimated savings being made by his Department or the European agriculture guidance and guarantee fund as a result of the weather.

Dr. Boyson: There is no information available on which to base reliable estimates.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council

Mr. McCusker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland where he expects to acquire premises for the secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council; and how much he expects to spend on *(a)* acquisition, *(b)* refurbishment and *(c)* providing the level of security which will be necessary to protect those working in or with the secretariat.

Mr. Tom King: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Health Bodies (Funding)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all statutory health bodies indicating the funding available from his Department for each body for each of the past five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Hospital Statistics

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the ratio of *(a)* hospital beds and *(b)* qualified nurses per head of population and per patient for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The ratios of hospital beds to population and of staff to population are given in the table. The relationship between available beds and patients occupying beds is normally expressed as the percentage of available beds occupied and this is also given in the table. Figures for the numbers of qualified nurses working in hospitals, and for occupied beds are shown in the table. Available overall manpower statistics identify staff working in hospitals at a particular point in time, but do not differentiate between types of activities within the hospital. Crude ratios of staff to the occupation of hospital beds not taking into account varying factors such as the age of patients and the type or complexity of treatment given are not therefore meaningful.

NHS hospitals in England

	1975	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Average daily numbers of available beds per 1,000 population	8·3	8·2	8·1	7·9	7·7	7·6	7·5	7·4	7·3	7·1
Percentage of available beds occupied*	80·7	81·1	81·4	81·1	81·1	81·3	81·3	80·4	80·6	80·5
Qualified hospital nurses and midwives at 30 September (whole time equivalents)†	139,200	145,500	150,500	155,600	158,300	164,100	175,100	181,600	184,700	188,500
Qualified hospital nurses and midwives per 1,000 population	3·0	3·1	3·2	3·4	3·4	3·5	3·7	3·9	3·9	4·0
Average daily number of occupied beds† *	312,700	310,800	306,200	299,500	293,300	289,500	285,900	279,800	276,400	269,300

* Occupancy figures are based on a midnight count and do not include patients who do not stay overnight in hospital.
† Rounded to the nearest hundred.

Kidney Transplants

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what evidence he has of kidneys being purchased from India for use in transplant operations in Britain; and what steps he is taking to ensure that all donated kidneys used within the National Health Service have been procured without pressure on the donors.

Mr. Whitney: We have no evidence that kidneys have been purchased from India, although there have been allegations that private patients from the Indian subcontinent given transplants in this country have paid donors from their own areas to accompany them and provide a kidney. Details of these allegations have been made available to the General Medical Council, which has issued interim advice to doctors that

"It is unethical and improper for a registered medical practitioner, wittingly or unwittingly, to encourage or take part in any way in the development of such trafficking in the sale of human organs; and that, accordingly, no surgeon should undertake the transplantation of a non-regenerative organ from a living donor without first making due inquiry to establish beyond reasonable doubt that the donor's consent has not been given as a result of any form of undue influence".

We have already condemned the abhorrent practice of selling organs for transplantation. We shall be considering the need for any further Government action when full advice has been issued by the council.

Fewer than 10 per cent. of kidneys transplanted into National Health Service patients come from live donors and there is no evidence that such donors have ever been subject to pressure.

Hypothermia

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for the United Kingdom and for England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, separately, the number of deaths from hypothermia for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and if he will state how many of each annual total were deaths of people aged *(a)* 65 years and over and *(b)* 80 years and over.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows at *(a)* the numbers of deaths in the United Kingdom and its constituent parts where hypothermia was assigned as the underlying cause of death*. For England and Wales and for Scotland, but not for Northern Ireland, there are also statistics on the cases where hypothermia was mentioned on the death certificates, whether it was assigned as the underlying cause or not. The available figures are given at *(b)*. A change in the international classification of diseases in 1979 means that the figures for 1975-78 for underlying cause are not comparable with those of later years. This change is not thought to have affected the statistics for mentions of hypothermia.

Hypothermia deaths: (a) as underlying cause of death and (b) with mention of hypothermia on death certificate United Kingdom, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, all ages, aged 65 years and over and aged 80 years and over, 1975-1985.

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985*
(a) Underlying cause†											
United Kingdom											
All ages	40	54	41	42	518	319	377	411	287	329	415
65 and over	34	48	37	38	400	255	301	327	232	263	363
80 and over	20	27	16	17	220	116	160	178	126	134	195
England and Wales											
All ages	25	21	14	21	435	261	276	326	221	266	364
65 and over	24	20	14	18	333	207	224	258	179	215	315
80 and over	14	14	5	11	188	93	126	141	95	112	171
Scotland											
All ages	9	20	6	16	74	43	91	68	56	52	41
65 and over	5	15	5	15	60	36	69	54	44	39	39
80 and over	4	8	3	5	31	18	29	30	26	16	22
Northern Ireland											
All ages	6	13	21	5	9	15	10	17	10	11	10
65 and over	5	13	18	5	7	12	8	15	9	9	9
80 and over	2	5	8	1	1	5	5	7	5	6	2
(b) Mentions											
England and Wales											
All ages	511	585	613	708	824	596	685	671	539	555	657
65 and over	435	491	509	597	687	498	574	541	450	462	571
80 and over	250	271	280	327	374	237	326	319	261	257	336
Scotland											
All ages	150	228	158	205	259	199	254	196	179	176	153
65 and over	114	186	133	163	202	160	199	163	139	141	140
80 and over	65	83	72	74	95	68	87	72	78	66	74

* Figures for 1985 are for first half of year only ie January 1-June 30 (provisional)
† 1975-1978 International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 8th Revision code 788·9 (pt) 1979-1985 ICD 9th Revision 991·6 and 778·3 England and Wales, Northern Ireland E901 and 778·3 Scotland

Board and Lodging

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take regarding the board and lodgings regulations in the light of the recent supplementary benefit appeal tribunal decision on financial limits.

Mr. Newton: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to the decision of the Acton social security appeal tribunal against which the Chief Adjudication Officer has appealed to the commissioner. I understand that the Chief Social Security Commissioner has requested that further submissions be made about the point of law involved after the hearing of the Appeal Court in the case of R v. Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte Cotton, which is to be heard on 25 and 26 November. Meanwhile, my right hon. Friend has laid fresh regulations before the House, as he announced on 11 November at column 322. These have now been approved by both Houses and come into operation today.

AIDS

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has, broken down by area health authority, about the extent of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hayhoe: Up until 31 October of this year 241 cases had been reported to the communicable diseases surveillance centre. These may be broken down into geographical areas as follows:

Authority	*No.*
Thames regions	189
Wessex and S. Western	18
Other regions: Midlands and the North	24
Wales	4
Scotland	5
N. Ireland	1

Private Practice

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those health authorities whose private practice is authorised in terms of an annual number of bed days.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows:

Region	*District Health Authority*
Northern	Darlington
	South Tyneside
	Sunderland
Yorkshire	Airedale
	Huddersfield
	Scunthorpe
	York
	Harrogate
	Leeds Eastern
Trent	North Derbyshire
	South Lincolnshire
	Nottingham
East Anglian	Huntingdon

Region	District Health Authority
North West Thames	North West Hertfordshire Riverside
North East Thames	Barking, Havering and Brentwood Enfield
South East Thames	Eastbourne Bromley
South West Thames	North East Surrey West Surrey and North East Hampshire Chichester Kingston and Esher
Wessex	Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Southampton and South West Hampshire Winchester Basingstoke and North Hampshire
Oxford	Kettering
South Western	Bristol and Weston Frenchay Somerset (Yeovil Hospital *only*)
West Midlands	North Warwickshire Rugby Bromsgrove and Redditch Sandwell Solihull Coventry Shropshire
Mersey	Southport and Formby
North Western	Bury Tameside and Glossop
Special Health Authority	Hospitals for Sick Children

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give for each year since 1970 and for each region the number of attendances by *(a)* private out-patients, *(b)* private day cases and *(c)* private regular day patients;

(2) if he will give, for each special health authority, district health authority, regional health authority and for England as a whole *(a)* the number of authorised amenity beds on 31 December 1984, *(b)* the average daily number of beds occupied by amenity patients, *(c)* the discharges and deaths of amenity patients and *(d)* the income from amenity patients; and if he will give the 1983 figures for comparison;

(3) if he will explain the classification private regular day cases in Form SBH 211;

(4) if he will give, for each special health authority, district health authority, regional health authority and for England as a whole, the number of attendances during 1984 by *(a)* private out-patients, *(b)* private day cases and *(c)* private regular day patients; and if he will also give the 1983 figures for comparison;

(5) if he will give, for each special health authority, district health authority, regional health authority and for England as a whole *(a)* the number of authorised pay beds at 31 December 1984, *(b)* the average daily number of beds occupied by private patients during 1984 and *(c)* the number of discharges and deaths of private patients during 1984; and if he will give the 1983 figures for comparison;

(6) if he will list the private hospitals and nursing homes which treat National Health Service patients under contractual arrangements with health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those health authorities which have applied for limited authorisations for out-patient private practice to be replaced by general authorisations stating which applications were granted and which refused.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is not readily available in the form requested, but 191 district and special health authorities now have general authorisations for private out-patients. All requests for such authorisations received since March 1982 have been granted.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 and for each region, the total number of authorised pay beds, the total number of deaths and discharges of private patients occupying those beds and the average daily occupation of those beds by private patients.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is given in the tables.

Number of authorised pay beds on 31 December in NHS hospitals

Region*	1979	1980	1981	*1982	1983	1984
Northern	56	56	78	103	103	105
Yorkshire	140	140	154	182	199	199
Trent	130	130	150	143	143	143
East Anglian	90	90	94	106	106	108
North West Thames*	339	339	352	292	292	292
North East Thames*	278	278	286	398	404	410
South East Thames*	263	263	302	332	337	337
South West Thames*	156	156	168	180	182	194
Wessex	99	99	106	117	120	120
Oxford	164	164	180	180	180	180
South Western	78	78	82	102	104	104
West Midlands	181	181	217	258	267	276
Mersey	67	67	92	112	123	123
North Western	170	170	214	231	244	245
Special Health Authorities/Boards of Governors*	194	194	202	183	183	183
England	2,405	2,405	2,677	2,919	2,987	3,019

Average daily number of beds occupied by private patients in NHS hospitals

*Region**	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	**1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Northern	26	31	35	19	28	26
Yorkshire	85	87	89	68	76	77
Trent	69	68	62	54	52	37
East Anglian	57	58	64	47	55	40
North West Thames*	230	225	210	155	138	131
North East Thames*	165	158	154	198	186	172
South East Thames*	190	197	184	155	144	132
South West Thames*	88	90	87	75	81	64
Wessex	60	69	69	58	57	52
Oxford	103	103	85	84	91	85
South Western	46	46	49	43	53	42
West Midlands	109	109	108	80	82	80
Mersey	38	40	47	42	44	38
North Western	105	106	111	74	84	75
Special Health Authorities Boards of Governors*	136	126	117	107	103	104
England†	1,508	1,514	1,469	1,259	1,264	1,156

Discharges and deaths of private patients in NHS hospitals

*Region**	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	**1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Northern	2,812	2,901	3,704	1,555	2,382	2,261
Yorkshire	5,606	6,229	6,049	4,008	4,462	4,877
Trent	4,795	5,065	4,584	3,834	3,976	2,979
East Anglian	3,401	3,923	4,425	3,136	3,617	2,715
North West Thames*	11,699	12,395	12,357	9,331	8,891	8,008
North East Thames*	9,229	9,787	9,441	11,412	11,170	10,531
South East Thames*	10,087	11,107	10,925	9,309	9,090	8,751
South West Thames*	5,545	5,819	6,156	5,103	5,638	5,144
Wessex	4,462	4,947	5,306	4,425	4,395	4,129
Oxford	6,110	6,587	5,412	5,607	5,927	5,927
South Western	2,962	3,352	3,492	3,333	3,038	2,914
West Midlands	7,356	8,011	7,876	5,597	6,015	5,716
Mersey	2,333	2,770	3,156	2,370	2,651	2,599
North Western	8,313	9,293	9,203	5,878	5,946	5,499
Special Health Authorities Boards of Governors*	6,418	6,379	5,653	5,788	5,740	5,439
England	91,128	98,565	97,739	80,686	82,938	77,489

* Because of NHS restructuring in 1982 the regional figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period.
† Regional figures may not sum exactly to the England total because of rounding.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, if he will give, for 1984-85 and for each region, district and special health authority, the total income received under *(a)* section 58, *(b)* section 65 and *(c)* section 66 of the National Health Service Act 1977; and if he will give the 1983-84 figures for comparison.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following are the figures shown by the authorities' annual accounts for 1983-84 and 1984-85. All 1984-85 figures are, at this stage, provisional.

	1983-84			*1984-85*		
	Section 58 £	*Section 65* £	*Section 66* £	*Section 58* £	*Section 65* £	*Section 66* £
Northern Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
Hartlepool	—	27,211	8,682	11	21,371	11,334
North Tees	282	31,806	4,594	102	30,823	7,383
South Tees	—	105,448	38,330	975	114,684	42,192
East Cumbria	—	83,370	12,713	—	57,818	11,479
South Cumbria	—	96,425	13,447	—	135,388	16,374
West Cumbria	—	30,001	3,643	—	2,210	977
Darlington	—	53,125	7,146	—	48,703	16,626
Durham	—	19,802	4,855	—	14,838	13,037
North West Durham	—	22,277	2,288	—	33,085	4,987
South West Durham	95	20,573	4,386	472	10,112	4,002
Northumberland	—	29,103	4,762	—	43,761	6,961
Gateshead	—	6,529	7,050	—	6,890	7,148
Newcastle upon Tyne	425	257,962	42,621	—	278,701	56,268
North Tyneside	—	27,490	1,407	—	11,864	1,593

	1983-84			1984-85		
	Section 58 £	Section 65 £	Section 66 £	Section 58 £	Section 65 £	Section 66 £
South Tyneside	—	29,783	7,202	—	27,088	8,286
Sunderland	—	89,017	23,546	—	123,225	22,318
Total	802	929,926	186,674	1,560	960,561	231,420
Yorkshire Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	5,200	—	—	—
Districts:						
Hull	4,675	66,702	24,901	8,452	67,458	18,212
East Yorks	—	59,038	10,216	—	77,036	16,262
Grimsby	—	76,473	37,534	—	95,780	41,748
Scunthorpe	2,297	84,061	13,071	1,020	109,621	15,650
Northallerton	—	39,700	4,452	—	31,905	6,271
York	—	88,096	35,112	—	87,644	39,654
Scarborough	—	23,112	24,422	—	7,518	28,050
Harrogate	—	144,084	8,317	—	114,993	10,683
Bradford	—	108,065	35,508	—	118,123	43,379
Airedale	—	230,612	15,158	—	306,132	16,420
Calderdale	—	412,497	38,006	—	409,780	42,630
Huddersfield	—	156,764	20,549	—	191,590	21,348
Dewesbury	—	61,650	7,957	—	56,624	11,760
Leeds Western	—	724,139	48,446	1,346	900,826	67,317
Leeds Eastern	—	175,857	20,564	—	188,328	26,069
Wakefield	—	159,808	26,146	—	107,267	29,647
Pontefract	—	59,392	12,435	—	38,173	11,970
Total	6,972	2,729,993	387,996	10,818	2,908,796	445,433
Trent Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
North Derbyshire	—	67,550	12,189	—	81,939	18,439
South Derbyshire	3,250	181,315	34,671	1,425	166,211	42,541
Leicestershire	—	339,204	40,823	—	365,973	51,661
North Lincolnshire	6,297	95,728	41,189	9,283	66,519	47,144
South Lincolnshire	—	196,359	24,623	14	205,954	34,572
Bassetlaw	—	42,151	9,441	—	38,872	10,144
Central Nottinghamshire	—	109,704	21,742	—	31,106	19,076
Nottingham	2,798	296,982	44,787	15,492	143,130	57,313
Barnsley	—	45,387	11,515	—	39,290	13,328
Doncaster	4,768	25,548	10,598	6,817	33,868	11,774
Rotherham	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sheffield	1,273	174,373	35,311	7,923	198,302	41,679
Total	18,386	1,574,360	286,889	40,955	1,371,163	347,671
East Anglian Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
Cambridge	—	288,031	40,248	34,834	173,144	55,480
Peterborough	10,923	31,414	17,417	13,822	19,844	17,724
West Suffolk	5,145	156,399	12,488	5,028	168,954	18,292
East Suffolk	—	425,352	8,889	—	256,027	30,571
Norwich	—	634,809	38,420	—	528,310	40,524
Great Yarmouth	—	68,670	11,015	—	61,960	15,108
West Norfolk and Wisbech	—	125,540	15,192	—	144,181	25,476
Huntingdon	—	52,790	2,513	—	123,692	3,120
Total	16,068	1,763,004	146,183	53,685	1,476,111	206,295
North West Thames Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
North Bedfordshire	—	156,898	23,249	—	146,930	28,056
South Bedfordshire	1,203	49,886	20,250	2,038	36,853	19,111
North Hertfordshire	4,327	51,875	8,346	5,548	43,620	12,201
East Hertfordshire	—	108,911	19,463	—	107,359	25,074
North West Hertfordshire	18	223,761	22,435	106	196,835	32,424
South West Hertfordshire	2,431	67,440	9,049	8,570	69,724	8,624
Barnet	1,666	141,289	50,098	1,553	103,662	49,404
Harrow	2,250	94,489	11,999	9,720	114,816	15,955
Hillingdon	—	472,123	45,468	—	504,970	58,619
Hounslow and Spelthorne	—	100,514	32,141	—	118,632	57,243
Ealing	—	6,842	5,084	—	1,164	5,029
Brent	—	73,095	10,552	—	37,243	8,265

	1983-84			1984-85		
	Section 58 £	Section 65 £	Section 66 £	Section 58 £	Section 65 £	Section 66 £
Paddington	—	1,881,595	91,800	—	1,783,525	108,261
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	1,025,952	119,949	—	1,033,474	132,248
Victoria	—	1,454,800	125,957	—	1,434,557	120,536
Total	11,947	5,909,250	595,840	27,535	5,733,365	681,049
North East Thames Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
Basildon and Thurrock	—	145,625	32,075	—	152,877	25,511
Mid Essex	—	380,860	49,189	—	452,077	88,934
North East Essex	—	143,205	25,739	—	140,206	29,672
West Essex	—	276,443	36,347	—	300,902	47,893
Southend	1,510	139,595	29,446	4,258	117,087	28,666
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	—	228,274	93,712	—	218,108	76,895
Hampstead	—	1,179,757	125,321	—	1,257,286	149,196
Bloomsbury	—	4,115,076	306,035	—	3,770,188	294,770
Islington	—	90,362	8,232	—	68,670	12,913
City and Hackney	—	365,813	19,360	—	341,095	22,848
Newham	—	12,239	875	—	14,973	3,827
Tower Hamlets	—	895,519	56,666	—	953,178	59,667
Enfield	—	55,519	12,704	—	58,265	10,741
Haringey	—	50,592	24,148	—	30,374	24,701
Redbridge	—	133,588	24,579	—	113,514	24,657
Waltham Forest	3,329	94,622	17,576	1,543	74,528	21,523
Total	4,839	8,307,089	862,005	5,801	8,063,327	922,413
South East Thames Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
Brighton	5,240	345,878	42,393	—	396,575	54,965
Eastbourne	—	53,152	29,140	56	79,995	27,516
Hastings	10	102,134	15,703	—	86,129	20,539
South East Kent	—	52,644	12,077	127	73,397	10,402
Canterbury and Thanet	5,515	77,926	54,812	260	70,394	49,777
Dartford and Gravesham	60	54,634	23,219	—	41,854	25,346
Maidstone	2,046	44,774	23,029	11,175	45,207	24,561
Medway	—	42,319	40,925	—	27,430	29,994
Tunbridge Wells	—	712,129	69,613	26,270	648,672	80,186
Bexley	—	132,496	24,318	—	124,106	24,161
Greenwich	4,236	174,459	35,447	17,688	122,807	32,869
Bromley	—	206,008	44,131	—	102,663	32,653
West Lambeth	—	1,379,422	74,539	1,493	1,408,203	85,046
Camberwell	—	1,315,985	66,396	—	1,257,097	70,145
Lewisham and North Southwark	—	1,495,880	45,209	—	1,409,048	66,281
Total	17,107	6,189,838	600,952	57,069	5,893,576	634,441
South West Thames Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
North West Surrey	—	236,785	43,073	—	278,186	49,651
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	5,874	162,959	37,792	13,149	155,480	44,642
South West Surrey	—	93,984	60,470	—	206,028	77,382
Mid Surrey	—	371,122	32,438	2,277	243,843	25,979
East Surrey	—	368,219	16,586	8,700	128,547	15,750
Chichester	—	109,743	19,094	—	116,297	27,862
Mid Downs	—	408,446	49,956	30	401,058	51,832
Worthing	—	43,757	562	—	47,453	758
Croydon	—	81,728	12,493	—	103,698	13,982
Kingston and Esher	—	143,423	14,476	—	154,329	24,341
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	—	46,815	19,050	—	22,032	17,119
Wandsworth	14	302,086	35,150	810	376,473	42,239
Merton and Sutton	3,860	251,266	24,908	5,013	267,307	37,413
Total	9,748	2,620,333	366,048	29,979	2,500,730	428,949
Wessex Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
East Dorset	—	147,630	30,489	—	130,632	40,461
West Dorset	11,310	26,893	4,598	17,576	19,489	4,405
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	—	398,471	62,790	—	379,452	76,936

	1983-84			1984-85		
	Section 58 £	Section 65 £	Section 66 £	Section 58 £	Section 65 £	Section 66 £
Southampton and South West Hampshire	—	339,742	49,523	—	247,886	67,499
Winchester	—	121,586	8,817	—	107,170	17,016
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	—	440,564	34,370	7,431	438,954	36,654
Salisbury	—	33,756	12,863	—	16,717	15,791
Swindon	—	308,719	51,640	—	220,664	29,554
Bath	—	50,039	15,247	—	39,624	14,445
Isle of Wight	—	160,089	14,854	3,679	159,524	15,231
Total	11,310	2,027,489	285,191	28,686	1,760,112	317,992
Oxford Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	1,588	—	—	1,775
Districts:						
East Berkshire	—	100,507	25,635	—	94,078	50,703
West Berkshire	—	549,907	32,888	—	589,447	74,909
Aylesbury	—	533,152	37,056	—	534,280	40,753
Wycombe	3,209	310,821	40,356	17,575	279,420	26,718
Milton Keynes	—	—	2,335	—	—	5,161
Kettering	—	260,612	28,710	—	285,941	36,463
Northampton	12,656	235,716	62,722	18,670	256,082	52,190
Oxford	—	742,916	105,814	8,322	842,397	129,076
Total	15,865	2,733,629	337,105	44,567	2,881,646	417,748
South Western Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
Bristol and Weston	—	105,618	39,719	—	108,385	50,865
Frenchay	—	103,369	1,568	—	120,737	14,656
Southmead	—	12,407	5,884	—	19,056	7,902
Cornwall	7,681	100,370	19,598	7,820	70,009	23,469
Exeter	14,330	72,419	27,262	12,180	70,784	29,184
North Devon	—	54,938	8,455	—	55,991	11,736
Plymouth	13,422	118,676	20,085	12,343	91,355	21,321
Torbay	—	115,569	34,005	4,266	58,008	24,148
Cheltenham	2,875	338,505	43,858	4,415	344,547	50,362
Gloucester	—	270,890	32,390	—	223,025	31,306
Somerset	19,122	292,116	23,733	19,830	264,315	30,190
Total	57,430	1,584,877	256,577	60,854	1,426,211	295,140
West Midlands Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
Bromsgrove and Redditch	—	30,437	9,427	—	49,602	11,912
Hereford	5,800	44,670	5,255	6,201	51,156	9,821
Kidderminster	—	39,687	11,983	—	57,192	14,280
Worcester	—	235,304	36,343	—	269,959	57,318
Shropshire	8,985	187,319	16,536	12,297	192,712	25,405
Mid Staffordshire	—	173,400	18,328	—	168,433	17,179
North Staffordshire	10,427	161,212	47,644	42,591	172,523	51,940
South East Staffordshire	—	137,258	20,289	990	147,656	31,417
Rugby	—	115,676	11,921	—	139,261	7,069
North Warwickshire	—	43,976	6,239	—	52,260	8,284
South Warwickshire	—	181,070	8,599	275	188,935	11,329
Central Birmingham	—	607,275	33,097	—	441,235	54,361
East Birmingham	—	35,471	1,416	—	27,931	3,247
North Birmingham	3,043	191,846	73,015	1,788	173,218	28,348
South Birmingham	—	125,512	3,789	11,154	126,536	8,536
West Birmingham	1,508	52,853	12,327	—	40,425	15,889
Coventry	—	167,732	13,160	—	157,673	42,230
Dudley	—	62,617	18,476	495	80,634	23,822
Sandwell	—	80,782	8,279	—	71,480	18,661
Solihull	1,452	46,225	1,426	1,511	48,510	3,110
Walsall	—	192,313	14,107	—	198,330	15,629
Wolverhampton	—	25,283	11,558	—	34,603	15,416
Total	31,215	2,937,918	383,212	77,303	2,890,265	475,203
Mersey Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
Chester	—	43,602	7,345	19,098	31,303	8,988
Crewe	—	197,137	42,138	—	255,546	68,530
Halton	—	—	996	—	—	764

	1983-84			1984-85		
	Section 58 £	Section 65 £	Section 66 £	Section 58 £	Section 65 £	Section 66 £
Macclesfield	—	63,144	18,087	—	91,091	24,224
Warrington	—	327,347	11,949	—	284,053	14,013
Liverpool	—	316,585	28,941	—	305,863	38,521
St. Helens and Knowsley	15,505	106,658	36,886	15,665	102,721	34,764
Southport and Formby	—	116,039	12,301	—	123,817	22,641
South Sefton	7,355	59,615	15,315	7,290	77,130	19,635
Wirral	—	151,938	32,055	1,056	118,109	24,662
Total	22,860	1,382,065	206,012	43,109	1,389,633	256,743
North Western Region						
Regional Health Authority	—	—	—	—	—	—
Districts:						
Lancashire	—	278,849	23,089	—	247,640	20,283
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	17,158	66,073	8,724	19,947	60,494	8,242
Preston	300	98,358	37,965	—	166,932	56,690
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	9,098	35,954	1,685	7,671	30,410	5,960
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	—	100,612	18,171	—	131,666	5,677
West Lancashire	—	199,179	15,099	—	212,178	23,726
Chorley and South Ribble	—	6,480	1,751	—	3,940	1,596
Bolton	—	99,089	6,267	—	11,329	171
Bury	—	238,386	17,321	—	209,407	23,027
North Manchester	—	40,666	14,525	—	27,191	16,542
Central Manchester	706	690,531	37,454	2,280	774,780	49,853
South Manchester	1,268	492,093	105,749	3,053	487,631	124,789
Oldham	—	71,872	12,760	—	75,244	17,621
Rochdale	—	6,047	6,495	—	10,895	5,596
Salford	—	38,254	8,565	5	69,482	18,694
Stockport	—	32,898	15,639	—	42,177	19,112
Tameside and Glossop	—	11,489	6,966	—	23,924	12,228
Trafford	—	58,908	7,821	—	48,230	9,471
Wigan	—	122,291	15,231	695	116,888	18,859
Total	28,530	2,688,028	361,278	33,651	2,750,437	438,137
Special Health Authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals						
Hospitals for Sick Children	—	1,446,546	52,419	—	1,663,748	55,059
National Hospital for Nervous Diseases	43,458	622,421	40,992	58,206	537,618	91,556
Moorfields Eye Hospital	—	622,255	26,185	—	553,490	38,417
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	—	88,494	7,554	—	110,306	6,258
National Heart and Chest Hospitals	—	1,208,289	29,667	30,712	1,644,836	42,936
Royal Marsden Hospital	—	1,043,733	422,369	—	1,102,392	453,993
Hammersmith and Acton	—	504,343	87,462	—	1,068,329	127,519
Queen Charlotte's Hospitals	—	579,719	26,640			
Eastman Dental Hospitals	—	—	5,821	—	—	6,569
Total	43,458	6,115,801	699,110	88,918	6,680,719	822,307
Total (England)	296,531	49,493,601	5,961,054	604,488	48,686,653	6,920,940

Note: All figures have been rounded and may not in all cases add up exactly to the totals shown.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list, for each year since 1979, the health authorities for which statutory auditors have issued reports of poor control over private patient income.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows:

Financial year and name of authority

1979-80
- Lincolnshire AHA
- Camden and Islington AHA
- East Sussex AHA

1980-81
- Bedfordshire AHA
- Hertfordshire AHA
- Kent AHA
- Greenwich and Bexley AHA
- Bromley AHA
- Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham AHA(T)
- Surrey AHA
- West Sussex AHA
- Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth AHA(T)
- Liverpool AHA(T)
- National Heart and Chest Hospitals BG

1981-82
- Nil

1982-83
- Central Nottinghamshire DHA
- Leicestershire DHA
- Lambeth DHA
- Bexley DHA
- Canterbury and Thanet DHA
- West Lambeth DHA
- Lewisham and North Southwark DHA
- Queen Charlotte's Hospital for Women BG

1983-84
- Bradford DHA
- South Tees DHA
- Darlington DHA
- Durham DHA
- Southern Derbyshire DHA
- Sheffield DHA

Nottingham DHA
Calderdale DHA
Dewsbury DHA
Airedale DHA
Islington DHA
Waltham Forest DHA
North East Essex DHA
West Suffolk DHA
Camberwell DHA
Brighton DHA
Lewisham and North Southwark DHA
Croydon DHA
Mid Downs DHA
Merton and Sutton DHA
National Hospitals for Nervous Diseases SHA
Wycombe DHA
Oxfordshire DHA
West Berkshire DHA

1983-84
Kettering DHA
Coventry DHA
Torbay DHA
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire DHA
Shropshire DHA
North Birmingham DHA
North Staffordshire DHA
Crewe DHA

1984-85 (Not completed)
Southmead DHA
Northampton DHA
East Berkshire DHA
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly DHA
Milton Keynes DHA
Great Yarmouth and Waveney DHA
Aylesbury Vale DHA
Central Birmingham DHA
Mid-Staffordshire DHA
Rugby DHA
Hammersmith and Fulham DHA
South Manchester DHA

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each district the expenditure on contractual arrangements for patient care in 1983-84 and 1984-85.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following are provisional figures shown by the annual accounts of district health authorities for 1984-85. The figures for 1983-84 were given in my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member on 21 January 1985 at columns *331-34*.

Expenditure on contractual arrangements for patients care—1984-85

District health authorities		£
Northern Region		
Hartlepool		—
North Tees		—
South Tees		6,170
East Cumbria		269,200
South Cumbria		19,375
West Cumbria		—
Darlington		604,215
Durham		6,863
North West Durham		—
South West Durham		—
Northumberland		407,606
Gateshead		—
Newcastle upon Tyne		92,000
North Tyneside		—
South Tyneside		—
Sunderland		—
	TOTAL	1,405,429
Yorkshire Region		
Hull		—
East Yorkshire		—
Grimsby		—
Scunthorpe		69,276
Northallerton		1,308,241
York		—
Scarborough		—
Harrogate		11,595
Bradford		—
Airedale		—
Calderdale		45,000
Huddersfield		145,796
Dewsbury		19,911
Leeds Western		105,881
Leeds Eastern		31,092
Wakefield		10,000
Pontefract		—
	TOTAL	1,746,792
Trent Region		
North Derbyshire		—
South Derbyshire		—
Leicestershire		49,778
North Lincolnshire		—
South Lincolnshire		—
Bassetlaw		—
Central Nottinghamshire		630
Nottingham		—
Barnsley		—
Doncaster		—
Rotherham		87,249
Sheffield		582,773
	TOTAL	720,430
East Anglian Region		
Cambridge		—
Peterborough		31,679
West Suffolk		192,181
East Suffolk		105,120
Norwich		95,568
Great Yarmouth		—
West Norfolk and Wisbech		—
Huntingdon		32,850
	TOTAL	457,398
North West Thames Region		
North Bedfordshire		—
South Bedfordshire		16,460
North Hertfordshire		96,622
East Hertfordshire		720,472
North West Hertfordshire		27,364
South West Hertfordshire		119,362
Barnet		58,756
Harrow		—
Hillingdon		1,701,571
Hounslow and Spelthorne		150,997
Ealing		6,803
Brent		—
Paddington		240,785
Hammersmith and Fulham		110,205
Victoria		239,984
	TOTAL	3,489,381
North East Thames Region		
Basildon and Thurrock		26,183
Mid Essex		288,314
North East Essex		452,028

District health authorities		£
West Essex		2,760
Southend		45,127
Barking, Havering and Brentwood		582,856
Hampstead		565,814
Bloomsbury		515,424
Islington		48,485
City and Hackney		1,349,350
Newham		66,211
Tower Hamlets		57,157
Enfield		747,549
Harringey		352,068
Redbridge		458,427
Waltham Forest		127,447
	TOTAL	5,685,200
South East Thames Region		
Brighton		318,712
Eastbourne		241,508
Hastings		19,031
South East Kent		46,278
Canterbury & Thanet		68,092
Dartford & Gravesham		—
Maidstone		11,794
Medway		34,573
Tunbridge Wells		59,263
Bexley		66,053
Greenwich		115,874
Bromley		442,402
West Lambeth		73,080
Camberwell		34,515
Lewisham & North Southwark		440,112
	TOTAL	1,971,287
South West Thames Region		
North West Surrey		211,452
West Surrey & North East Hampshire		306,752
South West Surrey		1,155,584
Mid Surrey		188,580
East Surrey		159,620
Chichester		1,009,808
Mid Downs		410,866
Worthing		693,498
Croydon		115,051
Kingston & Esher		159,587
Richmond, Twickenham & Roehampton		714,212
Wandsworth		554,135
Merton & Sutton		337,265
	TOTAL	6,016,410
Wessex Region		
East Dorset		450,744
West Dorset		—
Portsmouth & South East Hampshire		681,134
Southampton & South West Hampshire		102,262
Winchester		133,423
Basingstoke & North Hampshire		138,244
Salisbury		17,992
Swindon		16,449
Bath		401,655
Isle of Wight		—
	TOTAL	1,941,903
Oxford Region		
East Berkshire		166,614
West Berkshire		—
Aylesbury		35,228
Wycombe		41,724
Milton Keynes		156,736
Kettering		4,887
Northampton		445,914
Oxford		261,836
	TOTAL	1,129,939
South Western Region		
Bristol and Weston		88,012
Frenchay		61,691
Southmead		46,562
Cornwall		1,769,252
Exeter		—
North Devon		—
Plymouth		184,798
Torbay		157,061
Cheltenham		31,138
Gloucester		82,889
Somerset		—
	TOTAL	2,421,403
West Midlands Region		
Bromsgrove and Redditch		1,424
Hereford		—
Kidderminster		16,259
Worcester		32,451
Shropshire		85,877
Mid Staffordshire		100,100
North Staffordshire		218,490
South East Staffordshire		96,467
Rugby		23,053
North Warwickshire		737,469
South Warwickshire		507,118
Central Birmingham		4,028
East Birmingham		83,899
North Birmingham		13,771
South Birmingham		36,171
West Birmingham		5,475
Coventry		119,756
Dudley		110,069
Sandwell		53,967
Solihull		—
Walsall		61,485
Wolverhampton		117,689
	TOTAL	2,425,018
Mersey Region		
Chester		—
Crewe		9,730
Halton		—
Macclesfield		471
Warrington		—
Liverpool		1,674,903
St. Helens and Knowsley		—
Southport and Formby		646,698
South Sefton		6,770
Wirral		15,000
	TOTAL	2,353,572
North Western Region		
Lancaster		360,443
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde		236,325
Preston		888,512
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley		—
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale		34,868
West Lancashire		—
Chorley and South Ribble		739,647
Bolton		—
Bury		—
North Manchester		826,780
Central Manchester		—
South Manchester		690,402

District health authorities	£
Oldham	75,000
Rochdale	—
Salford	428,546
Stockport	—
Tameside and Glossop	94,823
Trafford	20,925
Wigan	102,000
TOTAL	4,498,271

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 1984, for each region and for England as a whole, the number of deaths and discharges a month and the number of beds occupied on a given date by patients receiving treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service; and if he will break down these figures in the categories of *(a)* medical, *(b)* surgical, *(c)* pre-convalescent and post-operative, *(d)* convalescent, *(e)* geriatric, *(f)* disease of the chest, *(g)* maternity, *(h)* mental illness, *(i)* mental handicap, *(j)* rehabilitation, *(k)* terminal care and *(l)* others; and if he will give the 1983 figures for comparison.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give, for each year since 1979, the number of *(a)* in-patient discharges and deaths and *(b)* new out-patients treated among patients receiving acute treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service in England.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is given in the table.

Patients receiving acute treatment under contractual arrangements with institutions outside the National Health Service—England*

Year	In-patient deaths and discharges	New out-patients treated
1979	21,976	40,202
1980	21,011	12,435
1981	21,463	12,229
1982	22,150	14,785
1983	22,360	13,327
1984†	24,945	14,296

* Acute is defined as all specialties except geriatrics, mental handicap, mental illness and maternity.
† Provisional.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has issued any guidelines to health authorities as to the inclusion in consultants' contracts of any restriction on their participation in the medical committees of private hospitals or clinics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any evidence of shortages of specialist staff in National Health Service hospitals arising from the alleged actions of private hospitals or clinics in attracting staff away from the National Health Service by offers of improved salaries or conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

NHS (Services)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give, for each district in 1984-85, the total expenditure on cleaning, the expenditure on services provided by private cleaning companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former, and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year;

(2) if he will give for each district in 1984-85 the total expenditure on catering, the expenditure on services provided by private catering companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former, and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year;

(3) if he will give for 1984-85 for each region the figures for payments to outside contractors for support services and for contractual arrangements for patient care indicating the services provided; if he will also give each figure as a percentage of the total expenditure on the relevant service in each region; and if he will also give the 1983-84 figures for comparison.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year since 1979 the percentage of the expenditure on *(a)* laundry, *(b)* domestic-cleaning services and *(c)* catering which has been paid to private contractors in the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following is the information requested, derived from the annual accounts of regional and district health authorities in England together with those of the special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals.

Percentages of the relevant current expenditure paid to private contractors

	Laundry	Domestic-cleaning services	Catering
1979-80	14·1	2·4	0·2
1980-81	12·0	2·5	0·3
1981-82	11·7	2·1	0·2
1982-83	11·5	2·0	0·2
1983-84	9·7	2·0	0·2
*1984-85	11·0	2·2	0·5

* Provisional figures.
Note:
The figures are not strictly comparable over the whole period as value added tax on contracted out services became reclaimable by health authorities on 1 September 1983.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each district in 1984-85 the total expenditure on laundry, the expenditure on services provided by private laundry companies, the latter figure as a percentage of the former and the difference between that percentage and the percentage in the previous year.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* details of the progress made by district health authorities in England in putting their services out to tender since 31 March in the manner of the answer to the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) on 12 June, *Official Report*, columns *489-493*.

Mr. Hayhoe: The position as at 30 September is shown in the tables. We are aware of 107 contracts which have been let to private contractors and these will realise an estimated £15·1 million in annual savings. Two hundred and fifty-eight tenders have been secured by in-house organisations and these will produce estimated annual savings of £13·9 million.

Districts	*Percentage of Service put out to Tender*			*Estimated Annual Savings*
	Catering	*Domestic*	*Laundry*	£
Northern RHA				
Hartlepool	12	15	nil	—
North Tees	nil	14	nil	—
South Tees	4	3	nil	45,000
East Cumbria	nil	nil	nil	—
South Cumbria	nil	100	100	—
West Cumbria	nil	3	nil	1,000
Darlington	nil	nil	nil	—
Durham	nil	nil	nil	—
North West Durham	nil	nil	100	18,000
South West Durham	nil	nil	nil	—
Newcastle	21	56	22	1,025,000
North Tyneside	nil	60	100	6,000
South Tyneside	38	80	nil	31,000
Sunderland	3	5	nil	15,000
Northumberland	11	15	29	108,000
Gateshead	51	43	nil	38,000
Yorkshire RHA				
Hull	13	15	nil	158,000
East Yorkshire	nil	26	56	298,000
Grimsby	76	3	nil	83,000
Scunthorpe	61	nil	nil	75,000
Northallerton	100	nil	100	16,000
York	nil	21	nil	169,000
Scarborough	28	24	100	48,000
Harrogate	21	14	nil	8,000
Bradford	nil	11	nil	17,000
Airedale	nil	nil	nil	—
Calderdale	100	100	100	530,000
Huddersfield	nil	2	nil	24,000
Dewsbury	nil	nil	100	64,000
Leeds Eastern	nil	nil	nil	—
Leeds Western	13	27	nil	197,000
Wakefield	11	nil	100	—
Pontefract	nil	nil	100	49,000
Trent RHA				
North Derbyshire	34	29	nil	197,000
South Derbyshire	nil	13	nil	60,000
Leicestershire	nil	50	nil	—
North Lincolnshire	1	20	100	151,000
South Lincolnshire	31	35	nil	124,000
Bassetlaw	nil	21	nil	—
C Notts	nil	72	nil	—
Nottingham	5	8	9	260,000
Barnsley	23	23	nil	197,000
Doncaster	6	35	nil	55,000
Rotherham	nil	6	nil	—
Sheffield	9	16	66	206,000
East Anglian RHA				
Cambridge	41	75	nil	455,000
Peterborough	nil	68	nil	115,000
Huntingdon	nil	100	100	490,000
Great Yarmouth/ Waverley	nil	64	100	261,000
West Norfolk/ Wisbech	100	100	100	399,000
Norwich	13	55	100	837,000
West Suffolk	nil	100	nil	160,000
East Suffolk	19	27	100	421,000
North West Thames RHA				
North Bedfordshire	100	nil	100	66,000
South Bedfordshire	nil	34	100	285,000
North Hertfordshire	nil	1	100	17,000
North West Hertfordshire	16	21	100	192,000
South West Hertfordshire	nil	46	nil	—
East Hertfordshire	nil	nil	100	—
Barnet	100	nil	100	8,000
Harrow	100	nil	100	15,000
Hillingdon	82	100	100	106,000
Ealing	nil	100	100	526,000
Hounslow/ Spelthorne	nil	100	100	1,412,000
Riverside (Hammersmith/ Fulham)	nil	42	100	
(Victoria)	33	59	49	1,086,000
Paddington & North Kensington	49	81	100	345,000
North East Thames RHA				
Brent	nil	nil	nil	—
Barking	100	26	nil	101,000
Basildon	nil	nil	100	74,000
Bloomsbury	nil	nil	100	—
City & Hackney	nil	nil	nil	—
Enfield	nil	nil	nil	—
Hampstead	nil	nil	nil	—
Haringey	nil	59	nil	334,000
Islington	2	nil	nil	7,000
Mid Essex	nil	80	100	494,000
Newham	nil	18	100	45,000
Redbridge	nil	19	nil	130,000
Tower Hamlets	nil	59	nil	271,000
Waltham Forest	10	7	40	100,000
West Essex	35	32	100	156,000
Southend	nil	8	100	209,000
North East Essex	35	12	nil	159,000
South East Thames RHA				
Bexley	nil	97	100	9,000
Brighton	19	13	nil	15,000
Bromley	100	98	100	1,040,000
Camberwell	nil	nil	100	56,000
Canterbury Thanet	nil	100	—	403,000
Dartford Gravesham	nil	nil	nil	—
Eastbourne	57	18	nil	124,000
Greenwich	nil	nil	nil	—
Hastings	nil	29	—	8,000
Lewisham North Southwark	nil	nil	nil	—
Maidstone	45	70	100	496,000
Medway	56	83	nil	188,000
South East Kent	100	19	nil	154,000
Tunbridge Wells	13	nil	100	—
West Lambeth	nil	nil	100	100,000
South West Thames RHA				
North West Surrey	nil	87	100	382,000
West Surrey North East Hants	10	30	94	32,000

Districts	Percentage of Service put out to Tender			Estimated Annual Savings £
	Catering	Domestic	Laundry	
East Surrey	nil	66	36	620,000
Mid Surrey	30	nil	30	55,000
South West Surrey	15	17	nil	165,000
Mid Downs	25	70	100	220,000
Chichester	45	59	nil	344,000
Worthing	100	51	nil	228,000
Kingston Esher	8	44	79	532,000
Croydon	nil	18	62	180,000
Richmond Twickenham Roehampton	72	66	93	799,000
Wandsworth	nil	98	100	248,000
Merton Sutton	29	85	26	1,116,000
Wessex RHA				
East Dorset	28	17	100	63,000
West Dorset	2	nil	nil	—
Portsmouth	nil	nil	nil	—
Southampton	nil	8	17	45,000
Winchester	8	6	100	75,000
Basingstoke	nil	nil	1	15,000
Salisbury	nil	nil	nil	—
Swindon	5	7	nil	30,000
Bath	nil	nil	nil	—
Isle of Wight	nil	nil	nil	—
Oxford RHA				
East Berkshire	8	6	nil	61,000
West Berkshire	7	5	nil	88,000
Aylesbury Vale	52	100	nil	360,000
Milton Keynes	nil	100	nil	98,000
Wycombe	nil	100	nil	134,000
Kettering	nil	22	nil	77,000
Northampton	2	nil	100	6,000
Oxford	7	75	nil	510,000
South Western RHA				
Cheltenham	100	nil	100	31,000
Gloucester	nil	nil	100	53,000
Frenchay	37	20	nil	76,000
Bristoil/Weston	nil	8	nil	63,000
Southmead	4	16	100	51,000
Somerset	53	57	100	887,000
Exeter	nil	nil	nil	—
North Devon	nil	100	100	131,000
Torbay	100	30	nil	29,000
Plymouth	nil	nil	100	60,000
Cornwall/Isles of Scilly	26	44	56	520,000
West Midlands RHA				
Mid Staffordshire	12	nil	nil	15,000
South Warwickshire	nil	16	nil	84,000
Kidderminster	nil	nil	nil	—
Shropshire	nil	4	nil	43,000
North Staffordshire	19	7	nil	67,000
Coventry	nil	1	nil	3,000
Bromsgrove and Redditch	nil	33	nil	97,000
Herefordshire	nil	1	nil	3,000
Rugby	100	26	100	10,000
North Warwickshire	nil	3	100	73,000
Solihull	38	48	nil	366,000
Wolverhampton	nil	nil	nil	—
Walsall	26	nil	nil	11,000
North Birmingham	nil	9	nil	24,000
Dudley	nil	8	nil	57,000
Sandwell	nil	nil	nil	—
East Birmingham	nil	27	nil	154,000
Central Birmingham	6	18	nil	104,000
South Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	—
South East Staffordshire	29	52	nil	162,000
Worcester	nil	12	nil	21,000
West Birmingham	nil	nil	nil	—
Mersey RHA				
Southport/ Formby	nil	28	nil	17,000
South Sefton	nil	2	nil	12,000
St Helens/ Knowsley	100	nil	nil	—
Wirral	36	43	nil	59,000
Liverpool	nil	nil	nil	—
Macclesfield	nil	87	nil	156,000
Halton	18	19	100	46,000
Warrington	nil	96	nil	589,000
Chester	53	100	100	795,000
Crewe	42	89	nil	478,000
North Western RHA				
North Manchester	nil	nil	nil	—
Central Manchester	56	nil	100	144,000
Wigan	33	25	nil	31,000
Stockport	70	nil	nil	163,000
Tameside/ Glossop	28	nil	nil	2,000
Bolton	nil	3	nil	—
Bury	65	13	nil	37,000
Chorley/South Ribble	nil	14	nil	—
Preston	nil	nil	nil	—
Lancaster	4	nil	nil	35,000
Blackpool	nil	nil	nil	—
Burnley	9	6	nil	—
South Manchester	nil	2	nil	9,000
Trafford	nil	10	100	—
Oldham	36	nil	nil	—
Salford	nil	nil	nil	—
West Lancashire	nil	3	nil	4,000
Blackburn	nil	nil	nil	—
Rochdale	12	19	nil	4,000

Ambulance Service

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for 1983 and 1984 the number of ambulance service journeys carrying non-National Health Service patients and the total mileage involved.

Mr. Whitney: Ambulance services in England provided 141,000 non-National Health Service patient journeys in 1983 and 127,000 in 1984. In 1983 the corresponding mileage was 1,157,000. Central collection of information on the ambulance services' mileage was discontinued in 1984. A "patient journey" is the carriage of one patient in one direction. "Non-NHS patients" are all those in respect of whose transport a charge is made. They include persons carried on behalf of local authorities and other organisations as well as those private patients not entitled to free transport.

Private Hospitals

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals for private hospital developments have been notified to him or authorised by him under the Health Services Act 1976 as amended by the Health Services Act 1980 since 21 January.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since 21 January 1985, 33 notifications have been received as follows. No applications for authorisation have been made.

	Number of beds
Gisburne Park, Clitheroe, Lancashire	*10
Garden hospital, London NW4	*2
Junction of Beverley road and Lowfield road, Anlaby, Hull, Humberside	†25
New road, Impington, Cambridge	†25
Clementine Churchill hospital, Sudbury hill, Harrow, Middlesex	*26
Park hospital, Sherwood Lodge drive, Arnold, Nottingham (operating theatre only)	*—
St. John of God hospital, Scorton road, Richmond, North Yorkshire (operating theatre only)	*—
St. Edmunds nursing home, St. Mary's Square, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk	*2
Glenthorne avenue, Shirley, Croydon, Surrey	*32
Princess Grace hospital (endoscopy unit only)	*—
Site adjoining Princess Grace hospital (Heron House, Marylebone road) (x-ray department only)	*—
507-511 London road, Thornton Heath, Surrey	55
BUPA Murrayfield hospital, Holmwood Drive, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside	*9
The Grange Lawrence nursing home, Bottisham, Cambridge	15
Nanhurst, Elmbridge road, Cranleigh, Surrey	60
New Hall hospital, Bodenham, Salisbury	*13
Belvedere nursing home, Scarborough	*4
The Ipswich surgical home, Fonnereau road, Ipswich, Suffolk	*12
Weston Hall, Weston road, Stafford	23
Saxon way, Eaglestone, Milton Keynes	24
Wessex Nuffield hospital, Winchester road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh	*12
Grosvenor Nuffield hospital, Wrexham road, Chester	*10
Purey Cust Nuffield hospital, Precentor's Court, York	*33
Wolverhampton Nuffield hospital, Wood road, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton (x-ray theatre only)	*—
Woking Nuffield hospital, Shores road, Woking, Surrey	*15
Thames Valley Nuffield hospital, Wexham street, Slough	*6
Tunbridge Wells Nuffield hospital, Kingswood road, Tunbridge Wells	*29
Newcastle Nuffield hospital, Osborne avenue, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	*40
Plymouth Nuffield hospital, Derriford road, Plymouth	*16
Lancaster and Lakeland Nuffield hospital, Meadowside, Lancaster	*32
Hull Nuffield hospital, Westbourne avenue, Hull	*6
Huddersfield Nuffield hospital, Birkby Hall road, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire	*11
Duchy House hospital, Queens road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire (new operating theatre, x-ray suite etc. only)	*—

* Extension to existing hospital.
† Amendment to previous notification.

Health Authorities (Competitive Tendering)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will name for each tendering exercise of which his Department is aware and which was completed since the last named in his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, columns *175-176*, the health authority and the hospital concerned and the successful tenderer.

Mr. Hayhoe: We are aware of the following additional cases:

Health Authority	*Hospital*	*Contractor or In House*
Domestic Services		
Barnsley	Community	In-house
Barnsley	District General hospital	In-house
Barnsley	Kendray	In-house
Bexley	Community	In-house
Bradford	Leeds road	In-house
Brighton	Hove General	In-house
Brighton	Lady Chichester	In-house
Bristol	Central Residences	In-house
Bristol	North unit (community)	In-house
Bromsgrove	Barnsley hall	In-house
Bury	Community	In-house
Calderdale	District	Mediclean
Canterbury	C & T Unit	Exclusive
Canterbury	Mental illness unit	HHS
Canterbury	Thanet General	In-house
Central Birmingham	Birmingham Childrens	In-house
Central Birmingham	Chester Burns	In-house
Central Birmingham	Dental	In-house
Central Birmingham	Jaffray	Crothalls
Central Birmingham	Midland Nerve	In-house
Chester	Countess of Chester hospital	In-house
Chester	Chester city hospital	In-house
Chester	Ellesmere Port hospital	In-house
Chester	Clinics and health centres	In-house
Cornwall/Isles of Scilly	District general hospital	In-house
Coventry	HQ	In-house
Crewe	Leighton hospital	In-house
Crewe	Community, Arclid & Baroney	In-house
Croydon	Community	Crothalls
Croydon	Warlingham Park	In-house
Doncaster	Montagu	In-house
Dudley	Hayley Green	Initial
Dudley	Ridge Hill	In-house
Ealing	Acute Unit	Mediclean
Ealing	Community	Blue Arrow
East Surrey	Dorking	In-house
East Yorkshire	Castle Hill	Initial
Eastbourne	Uckfield	In-house
Eastbourne	All Saints	In-house
Gateshead	Dryden Road	In-house
Great Yarmouth	James Paget	In-house
Haringey	North Middlesex	In-house
Hastings	Buchanan	In-house
Herefordshire	Victoria house	In-house
Hillingdon	Harefield	In-house
Hounslow/Spelthorne	Ashford	ICC
Huddersfield	Community	Reckitts
Hull	HQ	In-house
Hull	Springfield (offices)	In-house
Hull	Kingston General	Mediclean
Kettering	St. Mary's	In-house
Kingston & Esher	Kingston	In-house
Leeds Western	Cookridge & Ida	In-house
Macclesfield	Parkside	Blue Arrow
Maidstone	Kent County	In-house
Maidstone	Lenham	In-house
Merton and Sutton	Sutton & Carshalton	In-house
Merton and Sutton	Henderson hospital	In-house
Merton and Sutton	Queen Mary's	In-house
Mid Downs	Cuckfields/Haywards Heath	In-house
Mid Essex	St. Peters	ICC
Milton Keynes	DGH & Community	Initial
Milton Keynes	Renny Lodge	In-house
Newcastle	RVI & Dental	In-house
Newcastle	Newcastle General	In-house
Newham	Plaistow	In-house
North Birmingham	Victoria	Initial
North Birmingham	Tamworth General	In-house
North Birmingham	Hamerwick	In-house
North Derbyshire	Scarsdale	ICC
North Derbyshire	Penmore	In-house

Health Authority	Hospital	Contractor or In House
Domestic Services		
North Devon	District	In-house
North East Essex	Community	In-house
North Hertfordshire	Royston	In-house
		Berkeley
North Lincolnshire	Community	Taylorplan
		Berkeley
North Lincolnshire	Lincoln County	Taylorplan
North Lincolnshire	Lincoln County (Residence)	In-house
North Lincolnshire	St. Georges	In-house
North Lincolnshire	St. John's (non-clinical)	In-house
North Lincolnshire	Louth	In-house
North Lincolnshire	John Coupland	In-house
North Staffs	Biddulph	In-house
North Staffs	Haywood/Stanfield	In-house
North Staffs	Longton	In-house
North West Herts	Cell Barnes	In-house
North West Surrey	Botley's Park	Mediclean
North West Surrey	Ellesmere	H Cleaning & Ward Support Services
North West Surrey	Weybridge HC	In-house
North West Surrey	St. Peters	In-house
		Home
North Western RHA	Gateway House	Counties
Northumberland	Northgate	In-house
North Warwickshire	Bramcote hospital Pool Bank street	In-house
Nottingham	Basford	HHS
Nottingham	Community	In-house
Norwich	North Norfolk	In-house
Redbridge	Barking	Crothalls
Richmond, Twickenham Roehampton	Queen Mary	Sunlight
Richmond, Twickenham Roehampton	Barnes	In-house
Rochdale	Group 1 Clinics	In-house
Rochdale	Group 2 Clinics	In-house
Rugby	Community	In-house
Scarborough	Whitby	In-house
Scarborough	Malton	In-house
Sefton	Community	In-house
Sheffield	Childrens (residence)	In-house
Sheffield	Ryegate and Langhill	In-house
Sheffield	Charles Clifford	In-house
Sheffield	Jessop	In-house
Shropshire	Shrewsbury town centre	In-house
Solihull	Solihull hospital	Spinneys
Solihull	Morston Green hospital	Spinneys
Solihull	District HQ	In-house
Somerset	Cheddar	In-house
Somerset	Sandhill	In-house
Somerset	Minehead	In-house
Somerset	Mendip	In-house
Somerset	Norah Fry-Selwood	In-house
South Bedfordshire	St. Marys	Mediclean
South Derbyshire	Makeney	In-house
South Derbyshire	Women's	In-house
South Derbyshire	Ilkeston General	In-house
South Derbyshire	Queen Mary	In-house
South East Kent	Sheppway	In-house
South Manchester	Christie hospital	In-house
Southend	Westcliff	In-house
South Lincolnshire	Community	In-house
South Lincolnshire	Johnson & Holbeach	In-house
South Lincolnshire	Spilsby	In-house
Southport/Formby	Community	Ideal Cleaning
South Tyneside	Deans hospital	In-House
South Tyneside	Hebburn hospital	In-House
South Tyneside	Monkton hospital	In-House
South East Staffs	St. Matthews	In-House
Swindon	Victoria hospital	In-House
Sunderland	Community	ICC
Tower Hamlets	London hospital	In-House
Tower Hamlets	Community	In-House
Waltham Forest	Wanstead	In-House
Wandsworth	Springfield	ICC
Warrington	Warrington DGH	In-House
West Berkshire	Townlands	In-House
West Cumbria	Community	In-House
West Essex	Community	ISC
West Essex	Herts and Essex GH	In-House
West Lancashire	Community*	In-House
West Norfolk	District	In-House
West Suffolk	Newmarket	Sunlight
West Suffolk	Sudbury	In-House
West Suffolk	Resbridge hospital	In-House
Wigan	Astley	In-House
Winchester	Mount hospital	Mediclean
Worthing	Worthing	Crothalls
Wycombe	Wycombe General	In-House
Wycombe	Amersham General	In-House
York	Community	In-House
Yorkshire RHA	Blood transfusion	In-House
Catering Services		
Barking	District	In-House
Barnet	Barnet hospital	In-House
Barnsley	Keresford	In-House
Barnsley	Mount Vernon	In-House
Central Birmingham	Women's	In-House
Central Manchester	Dental hospital	In-House
Chester	Chester Royal infirmary	In-House
Chichester	Graylingwell hospital	In-house
Eastbourne	Hellingley	In-house
Grimsby	Grimsby DGH	In-house
Harrogate	Royal Bath	In-house
Hillingdon	Mount Vernon	In-house
Hull	Princess Royal	In-house
Hull	Victoria House HQ	In-house
Islington	Community	In-house
Lancaster	District	In-house
Lancaster	District butchery	Altnams
Mid Staffordshire	Trent	In-house
Newcastle	Walkergate	In-house
Newcastle	Freemon	In-house
Northallerton	District	In-house
Northampton	Cripps PGMC	In-house
North Derbyshire	Whittington Hale	In-house
North Staffordshire	Biddulph Grange	In-house
North Staffordshire	Orthopaedic	In-house
North Staffordshire	Bagnall	In-house
North Staffordshire	Stallington	In-house
North West Hertfordshire	Hill End and Hick Wick	In-house
North Western RHA	Gateway House	In-house
Nottingham	HQ	In-house
Nottingham	St. Ann's	In-house
Paddington	St. Mary's	Compass
Richmond, Twickenham Roehampton	Barnes	In-house
Rugby	District	In-house
Sheffield	Ryegate	In-house
Sheffield	Lightwood/Greneside	In-house
Sheffield	Chapeltown	In-house
Somerset	Bridgwater	
Somerset	Sandhill Park	In-house
Somerset	Mendip	In-house
Somerset	Wells	In-house
South East Kent	Dover	In-house
South East Staffordshire	St. Matthews	In-house
South Lincolnshire	Rauceley	In-house
South Tyneside	Mouleton	In-house
Stockport	Devonshire Royal	In-house
Stockport	St. Thomas's	In-house

Health Authority	Hospital	Contractor or In House
Domestic Services		
Stockport	Stepping Hill	In-house
Swindon	Savernake	In-house
Tameside	Peripheral hospitals	In-house
Torbay	South and West Sector unit	In-house
Victoria	Westminster	In-house
Walsall	Bloxwich	In-house
Walsall	General hospital	In-house
Walsall	Goscote	In-house
West Berks	Newbury/Sandleford	In-house
West Essex	Princess Alexandra	In-house
Wigan	Whelley	In-house
Winchester	Mount hospital	In-house
Wirrall	Clatterbridge	In-house
Worthing	Southlands	In-house
Worthing	Swandean	In-house
Laundry Services		
Barking	St. Georges	In-house
Basildon	Basildon	In-house
Basingstoke	District	In-house
Central Manchester	District	In-house
Chester	District	In-house
Cornwall	Falmouth	In-house
East Dorset	Falmouth	In-house
East Yorkshire	Falmouth	In-house
Hammersmith	Hammersmith and Acton hospitals	Nat Sunlight
Hammersmith	Queen Charlotte's	Westcotts
Hammersmith	Chelsea hospital	Westcotts
North Bedfordshire	District	In-house
North Herts	District	In-house
North West Durham	Shotley Bridge	In-house
Nottingham	Saxondale	In-house
Somerset	Sandhill	In-house
South Bedfordshire	District	In-house
Wandsworth	St. Georges	In-house
West Lambeth	District	In-house
Winchester	RHCP	Southampton HA

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. White asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many nurses earn less than £101 per week; and what percentage this is of total nurses.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret this information is not held centrally. However it is estimated from earnings data from 10 regional health authorities, that in the period April-September 1984, 30 per cent. of full-time nursing staff, virtually all either learners or unqualified nursing auxiliaries, earned on average less than £101 per week.

Junior Doctors (Training)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there are any plans for co-operation between the Royal Free hospital and the Charter medical clinic concerning training rotas for junior doctors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I know of no such plans but the hon. Member may wish to approach the district health authority direct.

Food Hazard Warnings

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations his Department has received regarding dissemination of information to local authorities about the food hazard warning system and related matters; if he will take steps to improve the flow of such information; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Representations are received from time to time, mainly about the speed and means of communicating food hazard warnings to Local Authorities. As to improving the system, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 29 October at column *447*.

Mentally-handicapped Young Persons

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if the figures are yet available for each district health authority and for each regional health authority of the number of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 years living in long-stay mental handicap hospitals; and, for each authority, what is the number living in *(a)* units of 25 or more beds, and *(b)* units of under 25 beds at 31 December 1984;

(2) what is the number of children on short-term placements in long-stay mental handicap hospitals for each district health authority and each regional health authority as at 31 December 1984; and for each authority, what is the number of units of: *(a)* 25 or more beds, and *(b)* under 25 beds;

(3) what were the numbers of children in long-stay mental handicap hospitals at 31 December 1984 for each district health authority and each regional health authority; and, for each authority, what was the number living in units of *(a)* 25 or more beds and *(b)* under 25 beds.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not collected centrally in precisely the form requested. I shall let my hon. Friend have the available information as soon as possible.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* current and past research projects since 1955 into the causes, means of transmission and treatment of Legionnaire's disease.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given, on 4 June, by my predecessor to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) at columns *145-146*.

Mr. McTaggart asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the report of the public inquiry into the outbreak of Legionnaire's disease in Stafford; and when the report is likely to be published.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am advised that the committee of inquiry hopes to submit an interim report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by the end of January 1986. This will concern itself with the cause of the outbreak in Stafford and the adequacy of measures taken to investigate and deal with it. The committee also hopes to submit a final report by the end of March 1986 which will make recommendations on any action necessary to reduce the danger of future outbreaks. It is too early to say when the reports will be published.

Substandard Housing (Tyne and Wear)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many properties have been reported as substandard in the Tyne and Wear area in accordance with DHSS circular S12/85.

Mr. Newton: During the six months ended 30 September 1985 four properties were reported to the local authority as substandard in the Tyne and Wear area in accordance with Department of Health and Social Security circular S12/85.

War Widows

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to award the second pension to pre-31 March 1973 war widows to bring them in line with service widows after that date.

Mr. Major: No. Pensions under the war pensions scheme administered by the Department are payable on the same basis to all widows irrespective of the date of their husband's service. The pensions which are payable, in addition, under the occupational pension scheme for the Armed Forces to the widows of men who served since 31 March 1973 are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Pregnavite Forte

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now include Pregnavite Forte in the list of drugs available on prescription to pregnant mothers.

Mr. Hayhoe: All the ingredients of this preparation remain available on National Health Service prescription. In these circumstances, the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs saw no need for the combination proprietary product. I understand that further representations have been made to the advisory committee and these will be considered at its next meeting in January.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the 1985 Christmas bonus would be if it had been raised in line with *(a)* the rise in the retail price index and *(b)* the increase in average earnings.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 21 October at column *54*.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Catholic Social Services (Liverpool) concerning the current financial situation in the city; what reply he has sent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received representations from Catholic Social Services (Liverpool). In his reply he expressed concern for the many children and handicapped people who rely on it and other voluntary agencies in Liverpool and condemned the impact of the behaviour of the Liverpool city council on the partnership which should exist between such agencies and the local statutory services. He also referred to the meeting representatives of voluntary organisations in Liverpool had last week, with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, at which they explained the effect on them of the city council's actions. We are watching the position closely.

Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether reciprocal arrangements exist within the EEC for kidney dialysis patients to obtain treatment in whatever country they visit.

Mr. Whitney: There are provisions under the European Community's social security arrangements for visitors who are covered by those arrangements and who need dialysis treatment, when visiting another member state to receive such treatment, through the host country's state health scheme, on the same terms as insured residents of that country.

Special procedures for advance booking of dialysis facilities have been agreed by the member states. Details of these procedures have been sent to all dialysis units in the United Kingdom, as well as to the British Kidney Patients Association and The National Federation of Kidney Patients Associations, together with a list compiled by the Commission, of units providing treatment in the member states. Visitors from the United Kingdom have to present form E111, except in Denmark and the Republic of Ireland.

Nurses (Leeds)

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secreary of State for Social Services what increase in the number of nurses in the Leeds Eastern health authority is needed to ensure that no operations are cancelled or services reduced because of shortage of nurses.

Mr. Hayhoe: Nurse staffing levels are a matter for local management. The hon. Member may wish to seek such information from the health authority chairman.

Human Tissue

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will place in the Library all documents and correspondence relating to the investigation in 1983 by officials of his Department into an alleged trade in dead human foetal material.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *94*]: In accordance with normal practice I am seeking the agreement of the individuals concerned to the placing of the correspondence in the Library. I shall let the hon. Member have a further reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assumptions were used by the Government Actuary in preparing the "Autumn Statement 1985" about the numbers of class 1 national insurance contributors in each of the earnings bands proposed for 1986-87, their aggregate earnings and about the proportion that are contracted out of the state earnings related pension scheme.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 November 1985, c. *80*]: The information is as follows:

Earnings bands £	Number paying standard rate national insurance contributions in Great Britain (millions)	Aggregated earnings (£ billions)	Proportion contracted out of the state earnings related pension scheme (percentage)
38-60	1·4	3·5	5
60-95	2·0	8·3	17
95-140	3·9	23·6	44
140-285	8·6	86·2	67
Over 285	1·7	34·4	68

DEFENCE

Ship Refits

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will publish the comparative cost of ships being refitted in Devonport and those being refitted in private yards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It remains my intention to publish an indication of the comparison of costs between these ships. It is not possible at this stage to give a date.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the proportion of refitting work for naval vessels that can be classified as emergent work.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Emergent work varies considerably as between different refits. On average, emergent work can be expected to account for approximately 10-30 per cent. of a refit.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the amount of unprogrammed work in the naval refitting programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: An allowance of some 6 to 7 per cent. is currently included in estimates for unprogrammed naval refit work.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the proportion of naval refitting work that is now carried out in the private sector.

Mr. Norman Lamont: During 1985-86 it is expected that about 22 per cent. of naval refitting, including work on Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels, will have been carried out in the private sector.

Military Aircraft (Refuelling)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements were made for refuelling of United Kingdom military aircraft flying from Belize to Colombia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The two Puma helicopters refuelled in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama (twice), in flying from Belize to Colombia. The Hercules flew direct. The Government are very grateful to all the countries concerned for the helpful response received to requests for diplomatic clearance for these flights and for assistance with refuelling the helicopters.

Service Officers (Pay)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the gross salaries and any additional allowances or deductions for second lieutenants, lieutenants and captains in the Army and the equivalent ranks in the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy for each year since 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The gross daily rates of pay for these Army ranks are set out in the table. They apply also to equivalent ranks in the other Services. A wide range of allowances and various forms of additional pay (such as parachute pay and diving pay) are available to individuals in particular circumstances. Apart from normal deductions of income tax and earnings-related national insurance contributions, service personnel are expected to pay a charge for food and accommodation where this is provided at public expense. These charges are fixed on the recommendation of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body and details of current rates are given in its 14th Report (Cmnd. 9526).

Daily rates of pay for male army officers (£)

	1 April 1979	1 April 1980	1 April 1981	1 April 1982	1 April 1983	1 April 1984*	1 November 1984†	1 April 1985
Second-Lieutenant								
Maximum	11·89	14·25	16·30	17·12	17·76	18·34	19·14	20·52
Minimum	8·74	10·00	11·51	12·05	12·50	12·74	13·22	13·86
Lieutenant								
Maximum	16·29	19·14	21·86	23·15	25·18	26·01	27·27	29·32
Minimum	14·73	17·30	19·78	20·95	22·78	23·53	24·67	26·52
Captain								
Maximum	21·31	25·03	28·56	30·49	33·18	34·27	36·08	38·87
Minimum	18·31	21·55	24·60	26·23	28·56	29·50	31·04	33·47

* 3 per cent. staged award.
† Full award.
Note: Slightly lower rates apply to female officers to reflect the lower rate of X-factor recommended for them by the Armed Forces Pay Review body.

Government Contracts

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the figures for the appropriate rates of profit as recommended by the review board for Government contracts with special reference to non-competitive naval building and naval refitting work.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Non-competitive naval building and naval refitting work attract the same rates of profit as all other non-competitive work placed by my Department. Full details of these rates were set out by my right hon. Friend, the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Butler) on 16 May, at columns 207-8.

Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the value of the assets of *(a)* Rosyth dockyard and *(b)* Devonport dockyard.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Figures for the value of the fixed assets of Rosyth and Devonport dockyards were published in the 1984-85 Defence Appropriation Accounts, laid before Parliament on 23 October 1985.

Cyprus Secrets Trial

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the seniority payments due to the seven acquitted defendants in the Cyprus Official Secrets Act trial are at the same level as they would have been had proceedings not been taken against them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985, c. *354*]: Soldiers and airmen are not paid seniority payments. I assume that the hon. Member is referring to length of service increments. Only one of the service men concerned had a length of service increment entitlement and the level of that payment has been unaffected by the legal proceedings that have taken place.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 November 1985

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia (British Airlift)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the future of the British airlift in Ethiopia.

Mr. Raison: Since my announcement on 22 July that there was a need for the airlift to be extended until December, the outlook in Ethiopia has continued to improve. The UN co-ordinator estimates that by the end of the year sufficient trucking capacity should exist to distribute likely relief needs in 1986. Moreover, the main international airport at Addis Ababa — at which our detachment is based — will be closed to heavy aircraft for two months early in 1986 for runway maintenance. Prospects for the main harvest are also encouraging and most of the roads are now usable again after the rains. This picture was confirmed by the Ethiopian relief and rehabilitation commissioner, Major Dawit, when he called on me on 5 November. I have decided therefore that the British airlift, which has made such a magnificent contribution to relief operations in Ethiopia since November 1984, should be discontinued in the latter part of December.

In other ways, however, we shall provide continuing substantial relief and rehabilitation assistance to Ethiopia during 1986, as well as food aid. As part of this, I have now decided to offer £2 million for agricultural rehabilitation, including seeds and tools, and £1 million for water provision schemes in Wollo. We shall also of course be contributing our share of European Community food aid and rehabilitation schemes in Ethiopia.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Plastic Baton Rounds

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with arrangements for making plastic baton rounds available to police forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: As the House was informed at the time, plastic baton rounds and CS gas for public order use were made available to police forces in Great Britain following the riots in 1981. In response to a question by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 19 November at columns *140-41* my hon. Friend the Minister of State listed those forces in England and Wales that hold such equipment.

It is right that such equipment should be available, for use only in the last resort, and subject to strict conditions. As part of their efforts to learn from the recent disorders, it is also right for chief officers of police to review their public order equipment in order to ensure that they can carry out their duty of maintaining order in their force areas.

If, in pursuit of that duty, a chief officer of police concludes that he does need plastic baton rounds, this is initially a matter for him and his police authority. But I should make it clear that where a chief officer concludes that he requires plastic baton rounds, and this is endorsed by the independent professional advice of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, I shall support him. In those circumstances, I regard it as essential that plastic baton rounds should be available to the force concerned.

My department is consulting the chief officers of police and the police authorities most immediately concerned to work out how such a requirement is best met.

Public Houses (Opening Hours)

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek to extend the hours of opening for public houses in England and Wales to a level comparable with opening hours in Scotland.

Mr. Mellor: We shall want to examine the full report of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' study of consumption of alcohol in Scotland, together with other relevant information, before deciding whether relaxations should be introduced in the permitted opening hours of licensed premises in England and Wales. We understand that the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' report is to be published early next year.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Metropolitan police will be expected to provide mutual aid to other police forces facing riot and civil disorder before other forces are called upon to do so because of the greater amount of riot equipment available to the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This is a matter for chief officers of police under section 14(1) of the Police Act 1964.

Immigration

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is the normal practice for immigration officers interviewing British subjects married to visitors to the United Kingdom to ask what role hon. Members have played in giving advice to their constituents in immigration cases.

Mr. Waddington: No.

Mr. Stan Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is collected by immigration officers about the advice given to their constituents by hon. Members in immigration cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: When a person sponsoring a visitor indicates that his Member has given him advice on the case that fact is routinely recorded by the immigration officer. Similarly, when a person is refused leave to enter, and a Member makes representations against that refusal, the points raised by the hon. Member will be recorded so that a response may be made. In addition, there may be occasions when correspondence between an hon. Member and a sponsor or passenger becomes available in the course of an examination. That information will also be collected if it is relevant to the immigration officer's decision.

Harmondsworth Detention Centre

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average daily cost of keeping a person in detention at Harmondsworth detention centre.

Mr. Waddington: The latest available information is that the cost per day of detaining a person in the immigration service detention centre at Harmondsworth was estimated at £115 for the financial year 1984-85. Subject to certain exceptions, the cost of detention for passengers refused leave to enter the country falls to the relevant airline or other company.

Mr. Crowther asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign and Commonwealth nationals intending to visit the United Kingdom are currently in detention at Harmondsworth detention centre.

Mr. Waddington: At noon on 22 November 16 foreign nationals and 27 Commonwealth citizens who had sought entry to the United Kingdom as visitors and who had either been refused entry or required to submit to further examination were detained at the Harmondsworth detention unit.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Cyprus Official Secrets Act Trial

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General for how long each of the seven acquitted defendants in the Cyprus Official Secrets Act trial were remanded in custody.

The Solicitor-General: The details set out hereafter relate to the periods after the defendants were charged by officers of the Metropolitan police. SAC Geoffrey Jones was in custody from 13 April 1984 until he was discharged on 28 October 1985. SAC Adam Lightowler was in custody from 13 April 1984 until he was discharged on 25 October 1985. SAC Wayne Kriehn was in custody from 13 April 1984 until 6 September 1984. Thereafter he was granted bail until 20 November 1984, when it was revoked. Thereafter he was in custody until he was discharged on 25 October 1985. SAC Christopher Payne was in custody from 13 April 1984 until 20 November 1984, when he was released on bail. SAC Gwynfor Owen was in custody from 13 April 1984 until 23 August 1984, when he was released on bail. Signalman Martin Tuffy was in custody from 13 April 1984 until 26 July 1984, when he was released on bail. Lance corporal Anthony Glass was in custody from 8 June 1984 until 26 July 1984, when he was released on bail.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees (Ethnic Community Reports)

Mr. Alton asked the Lord Privy Seal if there are any plans for Select Committee reports on ethnic communities to be published in the mother tongues of those communities.

Mr. Biffen: I am informed that following the publication of the report of the Home Affairs Committee on the Chinese community in Britain (HC No. 102 1984-85), the Hong Kong government London office prepared and distributed a summary of the report in Chinese at their own expense.

I am not aware of any plans to publish at public expense Select Committee reports on ethnic communities in languages other than English.

PRIME MINISTER

Scotland

Q14. **Mr. Craigen** asked the Prime Minister when she next intends to pay an official visit to Scotland.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

USA (President)

Q16. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister when she next expects to meet the President of the United States of America.

The Prime Minister: I met President Reagan last Thursday, 21 November, when he reported to the NATO Council on his meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. I have no immediate plans for a further meeting.

Scottish Teachers (Pay)

Q25. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Prime Minister what increases in absolute and percentage terms would be necessary to restore Scottish teachers' salaries to the position established following the Houghton committee in 1974.

The Prime Minister: The average salary paid to Scottish teachers on 1 April 1985, the date from which the next settlement should run, is around £800 (8 per cent.) less than the figure obtained by increasing the average salary following the 1974 Houghton award to allow for changes in the retail price index in the intervening period.

Elizabeth Keayes (Burglary)

Q27. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister for what reasons No. 10 Downing street asked for a news blackout in relation to the police investigation into the burglary at the home of Elizabeth Keayes in Battersea in November 1983; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him on my behalf by the Lord Privy Seal on Thursday 21 November at column 270.

Wales

Q36. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister when she next proposes to make an official visit to Wales.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Urban Renewal

Q46. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Prime Minister what responsibilities she has given to the members of the Government with regard to integrating different Departments' action on urban renewal in inner city areas.

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has responsibility for the inter-departmental urban programme which targets

specific grant resources on urban areas to support a range of initiatives to stimulate enterprise, improve the environment and encourage self-help. My noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment oversees the work of the five city action teams in the inner city partnership areas to improve the contribution of the programmes of his department and the Manpower Services Commission, Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment towards meeting the needs of those areas. Other Government Departments are also involved in the work of the city action teams.

Stonebridge

Q69. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Stonebridge.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Bristol

Q88. **Mr. Sayeed** asked the Prime Minister when she next plans to pay an official visit to Bristol.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Strang asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister if she will list her engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Falkland Islands (Government Support)

Mr. David Young asked the Prime Minister if she will give a detailed breakdown of expenditure in support of the Falkland Islands in the last year for which information is available; and if she will give the figures separately for *(a)* defence and *(b)* other areas of expenditure, indicating in each case the Departments responsible and the amounts of expenditure attributable to each.

The Prime Minister: Expenditure in support of the Falkland Islands in 1984-85 (the last full year for which information is available) was some £640 million. The total is made up as follows:

	£ million
(a) Ministry of Defence*	
Residual campaign costs	241
Garrison costs (including works)	391
(b) Foreign and Commonwealth Office	
War damage compensation	0·21
Diplomatic personnel	0·25
(c) Overseas Development Administration	
Development aid	6·3
Rehabilitation aid	0·7

* Estimated outturn met from the addition to the defence budget for Falklands costs.

South Africa (Commonwealth Commission)

Mr. Beith asked the Prime Minister whether financial institutions were among those consulted concerning the nomination of a British representative for the Commonwealth Commission which is to visit South Africa.

The Prime Minister: No.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Countryside Commission

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what response he has given to the Countryside Commission about its proposals to designate 46 sites where landowners should be paid to improve the environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The list of 46 sites which the Countryside Commission has sent me represents only its preliminary view of the sites that might be considered for designation as environmentally sensitive. It is now considering with the Nature Conservancy Council to which of these sites we might give priority if the Agriculture Bill which is currently before Parliament becomes law.

Contaminated Wine

Mr. Gould asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is satisfied with the steps taken by his Department to warn the public of the dangers of contaminated wine; and if he is satisfied that the action so far taken against vendors has provided effective protection to the public.

Mrs. Fenner: Yes. Both the trade and the public would seem to have taken notice of the advice issued by myself and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. The wine trade has co-operated fully with us in this matter and I have had no reports of any proceedings being taken by local authorities against traders for offering contaminated wine for sale for human consumption.

Irradiated Foods

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if Her Majesty's Government have yet received the report of the advisory committee on irradiated and novel foods; and when he expects this report to be published;

(2) what advice has been given to ports and customs authorities regarding possible attempts at importation of irradiated foodstuffs into the United Kingdom;

(3) what cases of alleged irradiated foodstuffs have been detected by port authorities and by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; and what action has been taken;

(4) if it is permitted to offer for sale imported foods which have been treated with ionising radiation; and what measures are taken to control such imports.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that the advisory committee's report on food irradiation will soon be presented to my right hon.

Friends the Secretary of State for Social Services and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. We expect to publish the report early in 1986.

In the United Kingdom, the importation and marketing of irradiated foods are at present prohibited by regulations, the enforcement of which is the responsibility of the port health and local authorities. No advice on enforcement has been issued by the Department and no information is held centrally about the activities of enforcement authorities.

WALES

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the criteria for establishing an area of outstanding natural beauty; what restrictions are imposed on development and caravan sites in such areas; what resources are available for their enforcement; and whether he plans to make any changes in the current criteria.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Section 87 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 provides that the Countryside Commission may, by order subject to confirmation by the Secretary of State, designate as areas of outstanding natural beauty such areas as appear to the commission to be of such outstanding natural beauty that it is desirable that the provisions of an Act should apply to them. AONB designation does not of itself impose restrictions on development, but in determining planning applications the local planning authority would need to have regard to the provisions of structure and local plans and any other material considerations including AONB designation. Structure plans which include AONBs normally contain restrictive land use policies to protect such areas. In addition, the Town and Country Planning (National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Conservation Areas etc.) Special Development Order 1985 imposes restrictions in areas of outstanding natural beauty on certain permitted development rights. The resources devoted to planning control and enforcement are a matter for individual planning authorities. I have no plans to change current criteria.

Welsh Language

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how responsibility for the Welsh Language is allocated within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on Monday 25 November.

Plant Breeding Station (Aberystwyth)

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to take over the Welsh plant breeding station, Gogerddan, Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to take over the Welsh plant breeding station. I do not consider that there would be any advantage in isolating agricultural research undertaken in Wales and I am convinced that the future of the station can best be secured within the framework of the Agricultural and Food Research Council.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

GCSE Examination

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will consider postponing the introduction of the new general certificate of secondary education examination until such time as further resources may be available and students suitably prepared for it.

Sir Keith Joseph: No. This reform of the examination system has been long awaited, and its announcement last year was widely welcomed. The Government's expenditure plans for 1986-87 provide scope for authorities to redeploy their resources towards policies to which they wish to give priority, including the GCSE, provided that they contain costs and take advantage of opportunities for efficiency savings.

Maintained Schools (Parental Contributions)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards parental financial contributions to the purchase of books and equipment in maintained schools in the light of the report of the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations of October 1985, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Dunn: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 22 November to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) at column *342*.

Anglo-Australian Telescope

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he has taken on Professor Don Matthewson's proposals for co-operation on the use of the Anglo-Australian telescope.

Mr. Walden: No proposals regarding the use of United Kingdom time on the Anglo-Australian telescope have been received from the Australian National University, in which Professor Don Mathewson holds a chair.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for financial reasons to curtail the access of British astronomers to the Anglo-Australian telescope.

Mr. Walden: None.

Ocean Drilling Programme

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on British participation in the ocean drilling programme.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) sees United Kingdom participation in the ocean drilling programme (ODP) as an important aspect of the council's support for the environmental sciences. It will also provide information and experience valuable to wider United Kingdom interests, including industry. The annual subscription for the ODP is $2·5 million. NERC, in discussion with major British oil companies and the Departments of Energy, Environment and Trade and Industry, is attempting to find sufficient resources for full United Kingdom membership.

Undergraduates (Statistics)

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the numbers of persons aged 18 years who were admitted as full-time first year undergraduates at universities in England and Wales in 1979 and each of the following years whose homes were in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* Tyne and Wear, *(c)* Newcastle upon Tyne and *(d)* Surrey: (i) in total and (ii) as a percentage of all persons aged 18 years living in each of the respective areas.

Mr. Walden: The readily available information is based on the number of new award-holders at United Kingdom universities. It is not possible to distinguish those who are aged 18 from this source.

Place of domicile (awarding local education authority)	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
England and Wales					
Number of new awards	67,634	68,945	67,947	65,697	63,983
Per 1,000 of relevant population*	86	84	83	79	77
Tyne and Wear					
Number of new awards	1,266	1,340	1,239	1,087	1,100
Per 1,000 of relevant population*	66	67	64	57	59
Newcastle upon Tyne					
Number of new awards	410	397	416	393	367
Per 1,000 of relevant population*	81	77	87	82	77
Surrey					
Number of new awards	2,462	2,506	2,469	2,441	2,396
Per 1,000 of relevant population*	161	155	142	139	137

* Per thousand of the average of the 18 and 19 population.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inland Revenue Records

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how long the central repository for Inland Revenue records at Bradford has not been able to process requests to see documents; and how long this is likely to continue.

Mr. Moore: It has not been possible to obtain files and records from the Inland Revenue repository at Bradford for 12 months because of the presence of a dangerously high level of asbestos particles. This is likely to continue for another 11 months.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has made any assessment of the effects of imposing value added tax on building alterations for the purpose of helping disabled people; and if he has any plans for removing value added tax on these building alterations and on charities.

Mr. Lawson: When building alterations were brought into the tax last year I thought it right to relieve some building alterations to suit the needs of the disabled. These limited reliefs related to access and toilets and bathrooms and were widely welcomed. I know there is pressure to go much further, but the cost of extending these limited reliefs to cover all building alterations for the disabled would be prohibitive. Accordingly, I have no plans to allow such a wide relief, nor to remove VAT on expenditure by charities.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value added tax bill on charities in 1984; how much of this was attributable to the imposition of value added tax on building alterations; and how much in total was raised in value added tax from organisations of and for disabled people.

Mr. Lawson: Information about the amounts of value added tax borne by charities is not available from official records and could only be collected at disproportionate cost.

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has examined complaints into the alleged detention and threatening of staff at Systime plc during a visit by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in July 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Income Tax

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost in the 1986-87 financial year of introducing a reduced rate band of 25p of income tax on (i) the first £750 of taxable income, (ii) the first £1,000 of taxable income and (iii) the first £1,500 of taxable income; and in each case, what would be the impact on the net income of a married man on half average earnings, three-quarters average earnings, average earnings, twice average earnings, five times average earnings and 10 times average earnings.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985, c. *333*.]: The direct revenue costs are estimated to be about £850 million, £1,100 million, and £1,600 million, respectively, in a full year at 1986-87 levels of income, compared with the illustrative income tax regime resulting from 5½ per cent. indexation of 1985-86 allowances, thresholds and bands published in the autumn statement 1985. At each of the levels of gross income specified, the gain in net income from introduction of the reduced rate bands would be (i) 72p, (ii) 96p and (iii) £1·44 per week respectively. The estimates of Revenue cost assume that a separate lower rate band would also be available to a

married couple against the wife's earned income; and that the thresholds for higher rates of tax would be unaffected by the introduction of the lower rate band.

TRANSPORT

A11 (Tuddenham Road)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assumptions were made in deciding on a 10-metres central reserve for the A11 dual carriageway at the junction with Tuddenham road as to the normal statutory maximum lengths of heavy goods vehicles with trailers, articulated vehicles and rigid lorries; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: The standard width of central reservation provided when a side road is linked to a dual carriageway is 10 metres. Exceptionally the width can be increased where high usage by long HGVs is expected. Such usage was not expected at the Tuddenham road junction and as indicated in the answer to my hon. Friend on 15 November, the Department will be discussing with Suffolk county council the possibility of measures to restrain the use of Tuddenham road by non-local heavy goods traffic.

Accident Statistics

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the figures of those killed and injured in road traffic accidents involving alcohol during 1984.

Mrs. Chalker: Detailed figures are included in "Road Accidents in Great Britain 1984" pages 25 to 29 published today. A copy is being placed in the Library.

Pelican Crossings

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the experiments into directional audible units and special push button units for pelican crossings will be completed; and when the units will be available for general use.

Mrs. Chalker: The experiments using both directional audible units and tactile push button units include an evaluation phase of the production equipment which should be completed by late 1986. Subject to successful evaluation the units should be available for general use during 1987.

Blisworth Bypass

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate of the timing of Blisworth, Northamptonshire, bypass.

Mrs. Chalker: Allowing for the completion of statutory procedures and anticipated public inquiry, the A43 Blisworth bypass construction is programmed to start in 1988.

Portsmouth Driving Test Centre

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are to be recruited to the Portsmounth driving test centre.

Mrs. Chalker: Two examiners have been posted into the Portsmouth centre in September and November. This has brought the total strength to seven sufficient, we consider, to reduce the present waiting period and meet current demand.

SCOTLAND

Undergraduates

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* mature and *(b)* other undergraduate students attending full-time courses at colleges and universities in Scotland have not yet received payment of their Scottish Education Department awards for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: By mid-October approximately 64,000 applications for students' awards had been received by the Scottish Education Department, of which fewer than 30 are still awaiting final assessments. Since the middle of October more than 1,000 late applications have been received, the majority of which have now been passed for payment. Late applications continue to be received daily, but the Department has standing arrangements with educational establishments to identify students who may suffer hardship as a result of consequential delays. Separate information for mature and other undergraduate students is not available.

Police Establishment

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the actual and establishment level of police in Scotland; and how the figures compare with 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is set out in the following table:

Police establishment and strength: Scotland

Year	*Authorised establishment at 30 September*	*Actual strength at 30 September*
1979	13,276	13,023
1985	13,465	13,273

The figures include officers who are employed at ports, airports and oil-related industrial sites and whose costs are not borne entirely by police authorities. Also included are officers on national training courses and those seconded to central service posts.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give actual and establishment level figures for police based in the Strathclyde police authority area from 1979 to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is set out in the following table:

Strathclyde police

Year	*Authorised police establishment at 30 September*	*Actual strength at 30 September*
1979	6,977	6,785
1980	6,955	6,936
1981	6,955	6,832
1982	6,954	6,811
1983	6,954	6,781
1984	6,954	6,785
1985	6,954	6,790

Manning levels in the force are determined by the police authority within the establishment figure authorised by my right hon. Friend.

Council Houses

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each Scottish housing authority the number of council houses which, at the latest convenient date, were empty and had been unlet for more than eight weeks; and if he will express that number in each case as a percentage of the total housing stock.

Mr. Ancram: This information in not collected centrally.

Paisley (Labour Statistics)

Mr. Allen Adams asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish unemployment figures for the Paisley area separately from those for greater Glasgow.

Mr. Allen Stewart: Unemployment figures for districts and parliamentary constituencies are published monthly in the *Employment Gazette*, available in the House of Commons Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hospital Closures

Rev. Martin Smyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what implications the possible closure of Crawfordsburn hospital has for patients waiting for admission to geriatric medicine in the North Down district of the Eastern board;

(2) what implications the closure of Haypark hospital, Belfast, has for patients waiting for admission to geriatric medicine in the Belfast district of the Eastern board, north and west; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what implications the closure of Templemore and Haypark hospitals, and the possible closure of Crawfordsburn hospital, has for patients awaiting geriatric outpatient treatment in *(a)* the east and north Belfast, *(b)* the North Down and *(c)* the Bangor districts of the Eastern health and social services boards;

(4) what implications the closure of Templemore Avenue hospital has for patients waiting for admission to geriatric medicine in the east Belfast district of the Eastern board.

Mr. Needham: The Department of Health and Social Services is currently considering proposals made by the Eastern health and social services board for the rationalisation of hospital services. The proposals involve a substantial realignment of beds, but in so far as geriatric bed provision is concerned the proposed closures of Haypark and Templemore Avenue hospitals would be offset by an equivalent expansion in the number of geriatric beds in other hospitals. The Department has not received proposals for the closure of Crawfordsburn hospital.

Tourism

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the earnings from tourism in the Province in each of the years 1968 to 1984, inclusive.

Dr. Boyson: Following is the information:

£ million

	Earnings from staying visitors	*Earnings from home holiday-makers*	*Earnings from day excursionists*
1968	17.655	*	11.555
1969	14.545	*	10.700
1970	16.039	*	8.620
1971	12.836	*	7.780
1972	8.640	7.040	7.438
1973	12.229	7.140	8.387
1974	13.135	7.910	8.847
1975	14.848	10.500	10.696
1976	15.709	12.190	12.402
1977	23.669	15.180	12.578
1978	30.578	14.210	13.260
1979	42.640	22.800	14.560
1980	54.050	18.100	17.860
1981	42.262	18.500	17.800
1982	48.001	16.800	20.000
1983	72.189	33.400	120.000
1984	77.751	29.600	130.000

* Separate records for this category were not maintained during this period

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council

Mr. McCusker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland where he expects to acquire premises for the secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council; and how much he expects to spend on *(a)* acquisition, *(b)* refurbishment and *(c)* providing the level of security which will be necessary to protect those working in or with the secretariat.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985]: Consideration is being given to possible premises but no firm decisions can be taken until the two Governments have notified each other of their acceptance of the agreement.

ENVIRONMENT

Derelict Land

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the acreage of derelict land in *(a)* the London borough of Ealing and *(b)* the constituency of Ealing, North; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The 1982 survey of derelict land in England, the latest information available, showed that at 1 April 1982 there were 190 acres of derelict land in the London borough of Ealing. The data in the survey are not broken down by parliamentary constituency.

Acid Rain

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what interim guidance for action on the effects of acid rain on stone he has received from Mr. Roy Butlin and the committee considering damage to medieval buildings.

Mrs. Rumbold None.

Systems-built Homes (Defects)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many systems-built homes have been

found to be defective; how many have been demolished; and how many remain in an unsatisfactory condition, in Yorkshire and Humberside.

Sir George Young: According to the responses by local authorities to the Department's stock condition inquiry earlier this year, there are 80,572 local authority owned non-traditional dwellings in Yorkshire and Humberside. On the basis of responses from local authorities which were able to make estimates, approximately 67 per cent. required work of a structural nature at 1 April 1985. The Department has no similar estimates of non-traditional dwellings in the rest of the public sector and in the private sector, but HIP forms submitted by local authorities this year show that there are at least 2,639 prefabricated reinforced concrete dwellings in Yorkshire and Humberside in the rest of the public sector and in the private sector. The Department has no estimate of the number of these dwellings that require structural work. The Department does not collect information on the numbers of non-traditional dwellings that are demolished.

Sewerage

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of miles of public sewers in the Yorkshire and Humberside region which are in poor condition; and what proportion of the total this represents.

Mr. John Patten: Yorkshire water authority has tentatively estimated that 200 out of the 2,400 miles forming the critical parts of its sewer network, and 1,150 of the remaining 12,400 miles, may be in poor structural condition. Information is not available for the Yorkshire and Humberside region as the economic region and the water authority areas differ. Investment in sewers has risen from £161 million in 1978-79 to around £290 million this year. Overall investment by water authorities (DOE services) will rise from around £818 million this year to £900 million next year.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums have been spent within the housing investment programme by each local authority in the Yorkshire and Humberside region in each of the years from and including 1979.

Sir George Young: Housing investment programme expenditure by each local authority in the Yorkshire and Humberside region in each of the financial years between 1978-79 and 1984-85 is as follows:

Housing Investment Programmes
Total Payments 1978-79 to 1984-85
21 November 1985

Region—Yorks and Humberside *Thousands*

Local authority	*1978-79*	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Beverley	1,506	2,345	1,991	2,023	2,319	2,839	4,578
Boothferry	1,174	939	1,527	1,474	1,365	2,189	2,138
Cleethorpes	2,036	1,894	2,028	1,741	2,121	3,219	2,613
East Yorkshire	1,837	2,820	2,150	1,619	1,539	2,232	1,264
Glanford	1,471	2,301	1,587	1,440	1,697	2,655	2,440
Great Grimsby	4,037	3,854	3,608	3,565	*4,430	4,339	4,373
Holderness	1,059	1,371	971	1,044	1,254	2,379	1,230
Kingston upon Hull	17,386	18,011	16,893	14,872	19,329	21,957	24,389
Scunthorpe	5,062	5,662	4,399	2,299	2,934	3,013	2,714
Craven	1,088	836	1,152	1,812	1,600	2,057	1,194
Hambleton	1,484	1,374	1,756	1,506	2,070	3,826	2,042
Harrogate	1,916	1,925	2,895	1,861	2,236	3,083	3,430
Richmondshire	904	954	937	906	1,086	1,778	1,646
Ryedale	1,553	1,248	1,218	1,384	1,600	4,348	1,902
Scarborough	1,304	1,047	1,512	1,300	1,869	3,485	2,518
Selby	1,590	2,727	2,905	4,188	6,725	4,805	2,637
York	2,675	3,349	3,022	2,864	4,458	6,431	6,428
Barnsley	10,448	11,625	8,043	7,653	9,141	10,774	17,230
Doncaster	14,089	18,496	13,796	8,966	13,523	23,789	12,353
Rotherham	12,876	15,861	13,476	10,620	12,301	14,659	15,806
Sheffield	23,281	26,085	23,473	19,915	29,417	36,679	31,742
Bradford	20,124	24,627	22,510	21,467	20,433	30,327	21,138
Calderdale	6,483	5,536	6,146	4,333	7,284	15,394	10,339
Kirklees	11,168	14,149	11,630	9,789	16,191	19,922	15,566
Leeds	29,103	31,974	29,202	24,212	41,337	37,023	29,903
Wakefield	16,399	16,586	13,624	10,968	17,357	17,131	15,051
	192,053	217,596	192,451	163,821	*225,616	280,333	236,584

*Incomplete figure.

Council Houses (Purchase Terms)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the weekly payment, at current interest rates but not including rent or rates, required to service purchase of a council flat or house valued at £20,000, £25,000, £30,000, £35,000, £40,000, £45,000 and £50,000, for tenants of two, five, 10, 15, 20 and 30 years' standing *(a)* by outright purchase and *(b)* by purchase of 25 per cent., 50 per cent., and 75 per cent. shared ownership.

Sir George Young: Using a typical building society mortgage interest rate of 12·75 per cent. per year, and

assuming a 100 per cent. mortgage for a term of 25 years, the weekly mortgage repayments, net of tax relief, would be as follows:

Net weekly mortgage repayments
A. Outright purchase

Discount percentage	Value (£000's) 20	25	30	35	40	45	50
32	26·40	33·00	39·60	46·20	52·80	*56·80	*64·55
35	25·24	31·54	37·85	44·16	50·47	56·78	*61·70
40	23·29	29·12	34·94	40·77	46·59	52·41	58·24
45	21·35	26·69	32·03	37·37	42·71	48·04	53·38
50	19·41	24·27	29·11	33·97	38·82	43·68	48·53
60	15·53	19·41	23·29	27·18	31·06	34·94	38·82

* These mortgage loans exceed the tax relief threshold of £30,000 and payments are therefore calculated in a slightly different way from the other figures. The payments shown here are for the first year of the loan and would rise slightly in each subsequent year.

B. Purchase of 25 per cent. share

Discount percentage	Value (£000's) 20	25	30	35	40	45	50
32	6·60	8·25	9·90	11·55	13·20	14·85	16·50
35	6·31	7·89	9·46	11·04	12·62	14·20	15·77
40	5·82	7·28	8·74	10·19	11·65	13·10	14·56
45	5·34	6·67	8·01	9·34	10·68	12·01	13·35
50	4·85	6·07	7·28	8·49	9·71	10·92	12·13
60	3·88	4·85	5·82	6·79	7·76	8·74	9·71

C. Purchase of 50 per cent. share

Discount percentage	Value (£000's) 20	25	30	35	40	45	50
32	13·20	16·50	19·80	23·10	26·40	29·70	33·00
35	12·62	15·77	18·93	22·08	25·24	28·39	31·54
40	11·65	14·56	17·47	20·38	23·29	26·21	29·12
45	10·68	13·35	16·01	18·68	21·35	24·02	26·69
50	9·71	12·13	14·56	16·99	19·41	21·84	24·27
60	7·76	9·71	11·65	13·59	15·53	17·47	19·41

D. Purchase of 75 per cent. share

Discount percentage	Value (000's) 20	25	30	35	40	45	50
32	19·80	24·75	29·70	34·65	39·60	44·55	49·50
35	18·93	23·66	28·39	33·12	37·85	42·59	47·32
40	17·47	21·84	26·21	30·57	34·94	39·31	43·68
45	16·01	20·02	24·02	28·03	32·03	36·03	40·04
50	14·56	18·20	21·84	25·48	29·12	32·76	36·40
60	11·65	14·56	17·47	20·38	23·29	26·21	29·12

Housing Starts

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the number of new housing construction starts that are necessary each year to maintain the housing stock at existing levels of quality and quantity; and if he will estimate the percentage of this figure which was achieved in the last year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: At 1984 rates of removal of dwellings from the housing stock, 22,000 new houses would be required annually to maintain the housing stock in England at the same size as at the end of 1984, that is to say 13 per cent. of the number started. Maintaining the quality of the stock depends far more on upkeep and renovation than on new building, hence there is no unique number of dwellings to be demolished and replaced to maintain the existing level of quality of the housing stock.

Local Government Bill

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will place in the Library examples of literature produced by local authorities which led him to propose the introduction of the Local Government Bill.

Mrs. Rumbold: The publicity provisions in the Local Government Bill were introduced on the basis of the recommendations of the Widdicombe inquiry's interim report on local authority publicity. The wide range of

publicity material considered by the committee of inquiry in the course of its work was sent to it direct by the local authorities concerned.

Toxteth Riots (Compensation)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many claims have been made for compensation following the Toxteth disturbances in 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Five claims have been made for compensation following the Toxteth disturbances in the current year. The Merseyside county council, as statutory compensating authority, is investigating these claims.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many claims for compensation have now been settled following the Toxteth riots in 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Merseyside county council has now settled 440 of the 723 claims received for riot damage compensation arising from the disturbances in Toxteth and other areas of Merseyside in 1981. Of those remaining, 276 claims were either withdrawn or rejected as not being eligible.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the lowest settlement agreed for compensation to date following the Toxteth riots in 1981; and what was the highest.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Merseyside county council was responsible under the Riot Damages Act 1886 for settling compensation claims following the disturbances in Toxteth. Details of individual settlements are confidential to the county council and the claimants. I am not in a position therefore to state the highest or lowest settlements agreed for compensation.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many claims for compensation are still outstanding arising from the Toxteth riots in 1981.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following the Toxteth disturbances in 1981, the Merseyside county council, as statutory compensating authority, received 723 claims for compensation. Of those received, seven remain to be settled including cases where the claimants have not pursued their claims either following an offer by the county council or where contact has been lost with the claimant.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take into consideration the rise in costs of building materials when deciding the amount available for home improvement grants.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend announced on 20 November the totals available for capital expenditure allocations to local authorities on the housing and other services blocks for 1986-87. Local authorities will be notified of their individual allocations before Christmas and it will then be for them to decide how much of their resources to make available for home improvement grants.

Silentnight Beds

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the directors of Silentnight Beds concerning rollout mattresses for military use.

Sir George Young: In February 1985, Silentnight was invited by the Ministry of Defence and the Crown Suppliers jointly to demonstrate a rollout mattress.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether Silentnight Beds is involved in research work for his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Although Silentnight was informed that additional development work would be necessary before the rollout mattress could be considered for purchase, I am not aware that it is undertaking any research work at present for either the Department of the Environment or for the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what contracts have been awarded to Silentnight Beds by his Department.

Sir George Young: No record exists of any contracts having been awarded to Silentnight by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Environment which companies have been involved in research work for his Department into rollout mattresses.

Sir George Young: None.

Hampstead Heath

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he proposes for the future of Hampstead heath after the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have considered very carefully the responses to our proposal announced on 4 October that the Corporation of the City of London should own and manage Hampstead heath, apart from the land going to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission together with Kenwood house. The responses make it clear that views continue to vary about the future of the heath and to favour more than one option. In particular, the London borough of Camden has submitted substantive alternative proposals. I need to examine its proposal closely and to review it among other options. As Camden did not submit its proposals until October, despite first being asked to do so in January, it may be that final decisions on ownership and management cannot be reached in time to enable transfer to take place on abolition day. In that case responsibility for the heath will be passed to the London residuary body while permanent arrangements are being finalised. I remain firmly committed to the concept of unified management for the heath.

My noble friend the Minister of State is today inviting the leaders of the London boroughs of Barnet, Camden and Haringey to meet him to review the position.

EMPLOYMENT

Small Companies (Profitability)

Mr. Heddle asked the Paymaster General if he will extend the scope of his inquiry into the effect of late payment of accounts by large companies on the profitability of small companies to include the payment practices of Government Departments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I assume my hon. Friend's question relates to discussions with representative organisations of the scope for reducing the problem of late payment of bills. The possibility of issuing guidance for customers and suppliers is under consideration. Government Departments already have standing instructions to pay bills promptly. Their practices will be taken into account in preparing guidance.

Information Technology

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General what level of financial support for information technology centres he proposes for 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Trippier: In the financial year 1985-86 the Manpower Services Commission has made provision amounting to £24 million towards the cost of the information technology centre programme. The level of financial support in 1986-87 will be dependent on the outcome of a detailed review of the programme which is currently in progress.

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to safeguard the training capacity of information technology centres.

Mr. Trippier: A comprehensive review of the information technology centre programme is nearing completion. I cannot anticipate what conclusions will be reached. However, ITeCs have been invited to plan for 1986-87 on the assumption that the Manpower Services Commission will offer, nationally at least, the same number of youth training scheme places as at present.

Job Creation and Redundancy Payments

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of people in the west midlands who have subscribed to the enterprise allowance scheme and loan guarantee scheme and the number of redundancy payments to which his Department has contributed in the same region within the framework of the redundancy fund.

Mr. Trippier: Since the enterprise allowance scheme began nationally on 1 August 1983, 12,215 people have joined in the west midlands region as at 31 October 1985. Between June 1981 and September 1981, 1,435 loans were granted under the loan guarantee scheme to firms in the west midlands, covering a loan value of £45·6 million. No redundancy payments figures are available separately for the west midlands.

Tourism

Mr. Bevan asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to encourage local authorities to develop the tourism industry in their area.

Mr. Trippier: We have drawn attention to the important role of local authorities in fostering tourism in our recent report "Pleasure Leisure and Jobs — The Business of Tourism". We have circulated copies of this report to all local authorities and asked them to consider whether they could be doing more, through their existing powers and resources, to encourage the development of tourism and reap its benefits.

Health and Safety

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many youth training scheme placements were *(a)* closed down and *(b)* not accepted on health and safety grounds in 1984.

Mr. Trippier: During 1984, 169 youth training scheme work placements were closed down and 61 were not accepted for the scheme primarily on health and safety grounds. In addition to these placements, one mode B1 scheme was closed in 1984 on grounds of health and safety.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many engineering apprenticeships were available in the east midlands in 1979 and 1984; and what was the comparable national figure for those years.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the precise form requested. However, figures provided by the engineering industry training board show that the number of craft and technician trainees registered as commencing training in 1979-80 was 2,359 in the east midlands, and 26,202 nationally; the corresponding numbers for 1983-84 were 1,059 and 12,040.

The numbers entering traditional apprenticeships are becoming increasingly irrelevant as a measure of the real level of skills training being undertaken as industry's skill needs change. For many industries including the expanding new technology sector, apprenticeship is not the usual means of achieving full skills status. The youth training scheme already enables a substantial amount of initial skills training to be carried out, and the expanded two year scheme will provide increased opportunity for flexible skills training relevant to employers' needs.

Adult Training

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General what are the most recent figures for the number of adult workers who receive training in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on comparable figures for West Germany.

Mr. Trippier: Information from the labour force survey carried out in the spring of 1984 indicates that about 2 million adults in employment had received some training during the four weeks before the survey interview. I regret that a comparable figure for West Germany is not available.

Hotel Classification

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Paymaster General when he expects to introduce the new hotel classification system in England.

Mr. Trippier: The English Tourist Board announced the introduction in England of the new voluntary classification system for tourist accommodation on 14

October. The new arrangements, which will also operate in Scotland and Wales, are being introduced immediately but will not fully supersede the existing scheme until 1 January 1987. Details of the new system are currently being circulated to the industry by the English Tourist Board. The Government fully support the new arrangements, which we believe will provide a better guarantee of standards without the need for statutory regulation and we hope that the scheme will be widely supported by the tourist industry.

GCHQ (ILO Conventions)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received from the International Labour Organisation regarding Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the applicability of International Labour Organisation conventions to Government communications headquarters.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There have been no such representations from the International Labour Organisation since my reply to the hon. Member on 11 June at column *413*. The comments relating to the GCHQ made by the committee of experts on the application of conventions and recommendations mentioned in that reply were discussed by the applications committee of the International Labour Conference on 18 June.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,276,861.

Mr. Crowther asked the Paymaster General how many people are *(a)* employed and *(b)* unemployed in the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area; and what were the corresponding figures one year ago.

Mr. Alan Clark: Comprehensive employment statistics for travel-to-work areas are not available except for dates when censuses of employment are taken. Censuses have been taken triennially since 1978 and the latest results are for September 1981. At that time, there were 90,400 employees in employment in the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area. More up to date employment figures for travel-to-work areas will become available following the publication of the 1984 census of employment in the spring of 1986.

On 10 October 1985 the number of unemployed claimants in the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area was 22,700. The corresponding figure for October 1984 was 21,503.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. O'Brien asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the technical and vocational education initiative and its future expansion.

Mr. Trippier: The initiative is now in its third year. In 1983 14 Local education authorities in England and Wales mounted the first TVEI projects, involving 144 schools and colleges. Last year the Government asked the Manpower Services Commission to extend the initiative and currently 74 projects in England, Scotland and Wales, with 500 schools and colleges are participating. Projects have proved to be popular and many have been oversubscribed. A further 28 proposals are currently being considered for a 1986 start.

In the White Papers "Better Schools" (Cmnd 9469) and "Education and Training for Young People" (Cmnd 9482), published earlier this year, the Government indicated their view that the TVEI projects were laying a foundation which must be built on. The Government have introduced a scheme of TVEI related in-service training for teachers and are considering the wider application of the lessons emerging from the initiative.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. Ottaway asked the Paymaster General how many people have now benefited from the enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Up to 31 October 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, 112,191 people have joined the enterprise allowance scheme.

Community Programme

Mr. Freeman asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on progress in expanding the community programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: At the end of October 1985 there were some 194,000 authorised places on the community programme projects of which 159,000 were filled. Steady progress is being made towards meeting the target of 230,000 filled places by the end of May 1986.

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Paymaster General what measures he is taking to assist future employment for those now threatened with redundancy at Systime plc.

Mr. Alan Clark: I understand that no announcement of redundancies has been made by Systime. If such an announcement is made, all the facilities of the Manpower Services Commission will be made available to help those made redundant find alternative employment or train for new jobs.

Mogul Foods Ltd.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what were the circumstances that led to the claim on the small firms loan guarantee scheme by the lender with respect to a loan to Mogul Foods Ltd. in 1982.

Mr. Trippier: I am satisfied that a valid claim was made on this guarantee following a default by the borrower, Mogul Foods Ltd. I understand that there is a dispute about the circumstances which led to a default. This dispute is not a matter for my Department.

Jobcentres

Mr. McGuire asked the Paymaster General if he will make it his policy that the provision of assistance by the staff of jobcentres to unemployed persons is not refused on the ground of their ineligibility for supplementary benefit because they have cash assets in excess of £3,000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: Assistance from jobcentre staff has always been available to anybody actively seeking a job. There are no plans to change this policy.

Wages

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the working population earns less than 90 per cent. of the average wage.

Mr. Alan Clark: For full-time adult employees in Great Britain in April 1985, 50 per cent. earned less than 90 per cent. of average gross weekly earnings.

Youth Training

Mrs. Peacock asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the standard of employment status and protection afforded to those on youth training scheme schemes.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November]: The youth training scheme is open to eligible young people who are employed as well as those who are unemployed. Young people who are on the scheme as employees will have a contract of employment and will be subject to all the normal terms and conditions applicable to comparable employees and will have the same statutory protection afforded to employees generally.

Providers of training and work experience are under a contractual obligation to treat unemployed young people who are on the scheme in the same way as if they were employees in respect of health and safety and race and sex discrimination. That obligation is reinforced by legislation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Blood Stocks

Mr. Skeet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) for what length of time blood stocks may be banked without detriment;

(2) what percentage of blood taken from donors is stored at very low temperatures; and whether the vectors of venereal diseases and AIDS are eliminated under these storage conditions.

Mr. Hayhoe: The length of time for which fresh blood and red cell components may be kept for transfusion purposes depends upon the type of anti-coagulant additive used; this can extend shelf life up to 35 days.

Red cell components of blood may be frozen and stored at very low temperatures, with a shelf life of several years. This procedure is very expensive and is used by the national blood transfusion service only in respect of very rare blood groups. Stocks kept represent less than 0·1 per cent. of the 2·5 million donations collected each year.

Very low temperature storage is employed only to ensure the availability of sufficient stocks of very rare blood groups: it will not prevent transmission of infection. All donations are routinely screened for HTLV III antibody and syphilis.

Board and Lodging

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the effects which the board and lodgings regulations have had on the level of charges made by landlords.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 29 October to the hon. Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike), for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) and for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) at columns *439-442*.

Health Authorities (Land and Property Sales)

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much land and property has been sold by health authorities since 1979; how much money has been raised; and how that money has been used.

Mr. Whitney: The information for health authorities in England is as follows:

Year ending 31 March	*Acres sold*	*Receipts £ million*
1979	627	7·5
1980	375	9·9
1981	1,031	15·2
1982	1,199	19·4
1983	551	18·0
1984	858	31·5
1985	1,017	*49·0

* Provisional figure.

The proceeds of all sales are retained by health authorities and used for the further development of health services.

Legionnaire's Disease

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what studies his Department has undertaken, in the light of recent outbreaks of Legionnaire's disease, into the efficacy of biocides as a means of eliminating Legionella bacteria in water cooling systems.

Mr. Hayhoe: None.

Reports on the investigation of the recent outbreaks of the disease in Stafford and Scotland have not yet been completed. I am advised that none of the reported outbreaks of the disease world wide has been associated with a water cooling system that has received regular conventional treatment with chlorine. However, my Department's officials are looking at the possibilities for developing a protocol for manufacturers on the in vitro testing of biocides.

War Widows (Pensions)

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider reviewing the financial arrangements for war widows' pensions.

Mr. Major: War widows pensions are kept under regular review. They were increased on 25 November by seven per cent. The age allowances which are payable with war widows pensions, and which were improved significantly last year, were also increased by seven per cent. from 25 November.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Body asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement about the changes that have been made in the payment of overtime for unsocial hours worked by nurses and midwives.

Mr. Hayhoe: The 1985-86 report of the independent pay review for nursing staff, midwives and health visitors recommended that special duty payments for working

unsocial hours (that is, percentage additions to basic pay rates for night and weekend working) should, for qualified nursing staff, be calculated on 1984-85 pay scales, whilst for unqualified staff 1985-86 pay scales should be used. The review body said that the purpose of this recommendation was to prevent any significant increase in the substantial amount of money being paid under this heading whilst the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council considered what is the right balance between basic pay and additional payments for a profession such as nursing. The review body took account of this adjustment in judging levels of basic pay and recommended higher increases for qualified than for unqualified staff.

The Government are implementing the review body's recommendations in two stages: five per cent. on the paybill from 1 April 1985 and the balance, giving total rises of up to 14·3 per cent. in the main clinical grades, from 1 February 1986. The recommendations in respect of special duty payments took effect from April.

The review body did not recommend any change in the basis for calculating overtime payments (that is, for hours worked in excess of 37½ per week). No change, therefore, has been made.

Physically and Sexually-abused Children

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what special funds are available to local authorities for the improvement of services dealing with the detection, treatment and rehabilitation of physically and sexually abused children.

Mr. Whitney: No special funds have been allocated to local authorities for services related to child abuse. The determination of priorities and allocation of resources for particular local services is for local authorities to decide within the resources available to them.

Smoking

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of the National Opinion Poll survey by the Health Education Council on the effectiveness of national no smoking day 1985.

Mr. Whitney: An evaluation of the 1985 national no smoking day, which will include data from the National Opinion Poll survey, will be published shortly. Copies will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

North West Thames Regional Health Authority

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* a table showing the hospitals in the North West Thames region which now have contract cleaning instead of in-house organisation and the number of employees made redundant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following cleaning contracts have been awarded to private contractors in the North West Thames region:

Health authority	*Hospital unit*
Ealing	Acute unit
Ealing	Community unit
Hounslow Spelthorne	Ashford hospital
Hounslow Spelthorne	South Middlesex small hospitals and community unit
Paddington	St. Mary's hospital
South Bedfordshire	St. Mary's hospital
Riverside	St. Mary Abbot hospital
Riverside	Westminster hospital

I regret that the other information requested is not available centrally.

Brent District Health Authority

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of senior administrators employed by the Brent district health authority together with designated post and salary before the implementation of the Griffiths report and the number now in post or to be appointed together with designations and salaries.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally. I suggest the hon. Member contacts the district health authority to obtain the information he seeks.

Lipotriad

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what alternative or equivalent medicine there is on the restricted drugs list to Lipotriad.

Mr. Hayhoe: Lipotriad is a multivitamin preparation and an adequate range of vitamins are available on National Health Service prescription.

Benefit Statistics

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing for 1971, 1981 and the latest date for which estimates are available the number of households in the United Kingdom, with the figures broken down to distinguish between no family, one family and two or more family households, as in Social Trends No. 15 table 2·5 for Great Britain, but also showing whether the married couples and lone parents have one, two, three or more dependent children, with the latter defined as children aged under 16 years or 16 to 18 years in full-time education.

Mr. Whitney: Information on the number of dependent children in families is only readily available for Great Britain in 1981 and 1983 as follows.

I shall let my hon. Friend have further information as soon as it is available.

Following is the information:

*Households**	*1981 census*		*1983 general household survey†*
	Numbers (thousands)	*Percentages*	*Percentages*
One family households			
Married couple only	4,989	26	27
Married couple with one dependent child	2,251	12	11
Married couple with two dependent children	2,600	13	13
Married couple with three or more dependent children	1,100	6	6
Married couple with non-dependent child(ren) only	1,586	8	8
Lone parent with one dependent child	471	2	2
Lone parent with two dependent children	302	2	2
Lone parent with three or more dependent children	143	1	1
Lone parent with non-dependent child(ren) only	720	4	4
Two or more family households	170	1	1
No family households	5,126	26	26
Total households	19,493	100	*100

* Households may contain other persons in addition to a family. A family is defined as a married couple with or without dependent children or a lone parent with children. Dependent children are those aged under 16 or 16-18 and in full-time education.

† The relatively small sample size of the General Household Survey—in 1983 it covered 10,000 households—means that results cannot be up-rated to give reliable estimates of actual numbers comparable in detail to those given by the Census.

Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will now consider augmenting his donor card scheme by initiating a contracting in scheme for organ transplant provision; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will review the ways in which organs are obtained for transplants; and if he will make a statement on the current position.

Mr. Whitney: Under the provisions of the Human Tissue Act 1961, organs may be removed for transplantation either if the deceased person has previously indicated in writing his willingness to be a donor, for example by signing an organ donor card, or if after reasonable inquiry there are no grounds for believing that his relatives have any objection. Successive Governments have undertaken a series of intitiatives to increase the numbers of organs becoming available for transplantation, in particular through encouraging people to carry a signed donor card.

Donor organs are still urgently needed and we are constantly seeking new ways of increasing public awareness of the benefits of organ transplantation and promoting the donor card scheme, but we see no need at present for a review of the ways in which organs are obtained. The largest computer register of people who are willing to donate their organs after their death in the United Kingdom is in Manchester, and we are watching its progress. We are considering ways in which a computer register might be provided on a national basis, if experience with the local schemes appears to justify this, but we do not expect to be able to make any announcement in the immediate future.

Renal Failure

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what change there has been in the resources devoted to end-stage renal failure over the past five years; if he will indicate statistically the growth or decline in such provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The provision of services for adult renal patients is a health authority responsibility, and information on the resources devoted to renal services is not collected centrally. Each regional health authority has agreed to accept new renal patients for treatment at an annual rate of at least 40 per million population by 1987, and we are monitoring their progress. The annual take-on rate in England rose from 21·0 per million in 1979 to 35·7 per million in 1984, and in a number of regions the 40 per million target has already been exceeded. The treatment of renal patients under the age of 16 was designated as a supra regional service from April 1984, and the funds allocated for its provision since then were £2,808,000 in 1984-85 and £3,343,000 in 1985-86 (both at 1985-86 cash levels). We expect to announce the 1986-87 allocation within the next few weeks.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people died of kidney failure over the past five years; if he will estimate what proportion of these people could have been saved if suitable kidney and transplant facilities had been available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collectd centrally in the form requested. Office of Population Censuses and Surveys figures for England and Wales, given below, show the total number of cases where nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis, chronic renal failure, and renal failure, unspecified, were recorded as the primary cause of death.

	Number
1980	7,986
1981	8,573
1982	8,951
1983	8,498
1984*	7,914

* 1984 figures are not compatible with those for earlier years because of a change in data coding.

These totals exclude cases, such as diabetic nephropathy, where the data coding classifies the death under the primary disease causing renal failure.

It is impossible to estimate the proportion of people who might not have died if more treatment facilities had been available. Some of those who died would have been receiving treatment and the majority of cases recorded would not be regarded as treatable because of the presence of other diseases.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the growth or decline in care of end-stage renal failure patients in terms of home dialysis, hospital dialysis continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis and transplants over the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: According to data provided by the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the numbers of renal patients on treatment at 31 December during each of the years shown were as follows:

	Home dialysis	*Hospital dialysis*	*CAPD**	*With functioning transplant*
1980	2,064	1,241	520	3,111
1981	2,162	1,373	907	3,532
1982	2,218	1,490	1,225	3,994
1983	2,135	1,536	1,485	4,360
1984	2,095	1,658	1,908	5,574

* Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis.

Vaccination

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children in each year since 1981 completed courses of vaccination with the following vaccines or combination of vaccines: *(a)* pertussis/diphtheria/tetanus (triple), *(b)* triple/polio, *(c)* triple/smallpox, *(d)* triple/measles, *(e)* triple/polio/smallpox, *(f)* pertussis, *(g)* pertussis/polio, *(h)* pertussis/diphtheria/polio, *(i)* pertussis/polio/tetanus, *(j)* pertussis/diphtheria/rubella and *(k)* pertussis/diphtheria.

Mr. Whitney: The information available is as follows:

Number of children under 16 completing primary courses of immunisation (England)

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Pertussis Diphtheria Tetanus (triple)	318,452	358,064	382,182	387,659
Pertussis	1,775	26,603	23,182	3,744
Pertussis/Diphtheria	260	155	167	216

Information is not held centrally on the other combinations quoted. It is recommended that children receive oral polio vaccine at the same time as the triple vaccine. Numbers for oral polio were:

1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
554,342	559,782	526,407	526,092

Smallpox vaccination has not formed part of the United Kingdom immunisation recommendations since 1981.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many vaccine-damage payments have been awarded for damage from a vaccine which according to the parents' recollection included a pertussis element in each year since 1981; and if he will give the total number of payments in each of these years.

Mr. Whitney: The information, up to 8 November 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, is as follows:

Number of awards made in which vaccination was stated by claimant to include a pertussis element

Year	*Number*	*Total awards*
1981	62	74
1982	30	43
1983	31	42
1984	24	29
1985	19	23
Total	166	211

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total number of people on hospital waiting lists in the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district for the years 1979 to 1984, on 31 March and by specialty.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list for admission to NHS hospitals at 31 March—Portsmouth and South East Hampshire district health authority

Specialty	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
General medicine	10	14	10	12	—	39
Dermatology	18	33	32	30	26	22
Rheumatology	12	13	17	8	16	6
Geriatrics	57	44	32	39	35	10
General surgery	1,272	924	1,311	1,322	1,412	1,771
Ear, nose and throat	1,582	1,768	1,680	1,483	1,551	1,314
Trau. and orth.	1,517	1,169	1,193	1,130	992	1,157
Ophthalmology	635	474	463	446	428	363
Radiotherapy	3	7	10	5	—	12
Urology	1,042	1,058	688	968	952	992
Thoracic surgery	—	—	2	—	—	—
Oral surgery	149	160	170	188	376	472
Gynaecology	1,096	605	705	1,146	1,093	1,030
Mental handicap	59	57	—	—	—	—
Total	7,452	6,326	6,313	6,777	6,881	7,188

Mental Illness (Hospital Provision)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with provision for the mentally handicapped and the mentally ill in the Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health district with the reorganisation of hospitals in that area.

Mr. Whitney: The Portsmouth and South East Hampshire health authority is responsible for the provision of health services in its area. The authority's plans for the reorganisation and development of its services for mentally handicapped and mentally ill people have been widely consulted upon. The plans accord with national and local policies of developing community-based care for these patients.

St. James's Hospital, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the proposed closure of St. James's hospital, Portsmouth.

Mr. Whitney: None.

Whooping Cough

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many children were vaccinated against whooping cough in each year since 1974 and to date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will launch a publicity campaign on whooping cough and the case for vaccination.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table:

Children under age 16 completing primary courses of immunisation against whooping cough: England

Year	Number of children
1974	*428,300
1975	*247,900
1976	*240,600
1977	191,899
1978	250,250
1980	285,561
1981	320,496
1982	384,827
1983	405,744
1984	391,699

*Includes estimated numbers for one Area Health Authority.

The Department has provided additional funding of £483,000 to the Health Education Council to allow it to co-ordinate a national campaign. The campaign was launched in September and will run for the expected period of the whooping cough epidemic.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many children have contracted whooping cough in each year since 1974 and to date.

Mr. Whitney: The latest available figures on notifications of whooping cough are shown in the table.

Corrected number of notifications of whooping cough in 0-14 age-group 1974-1985 England and Wales

Year	Number
1974	15,677
1975	8,514
1976	3,750
1977	16,857
1978	62,881
1979	29,512
1980	20,301
1981	18,728
1982	63,093
1983	18,466
1984	5,263
1985*	15,261

* 1 January to 15 November (provisional).

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the contraction rate of whooping cough.

Mr. Whitney: Notification rates for whooping cough for 1974-1984 are given in the table.

Corrected number of notifications of whooping cough per 100,000 population, 1974-1984, all ages England and Wales

Year	Rate
1974	32·8
1975	18·0
1976	7·9
1977	35·3
1978	133·4
1979	62·2
1980	42·6
1981	39·1
1982	132·7
1983	38·9
1984	11·1

Child Benefit

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of single mothers who have withdrawn claims for child benefit in each single year since 1979, the number of case papers which have been requested from benefit officers' staff by social security fraud squad officers in each single year since 1979; and if he will list the total number of officers who have been employed by his Department as fraud squad investigators during the same period giving a breakdown of the regions of the country to which they have been assigned.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *285*]: I regret that the information requested concerning withdrawn claims for child benefit is not available. If the hon. Member has in mind the Department's special claims control teams which were set up in 1981 and are the only fraud staff working in groups, the following table sets out a region by region breakdown of staff numbers for the last two years and a national total for the preceding two years. The number of case papers referred by benefit officers to the teams is not available.

Region	1984-85	1983-84	1982-83	1981-82
North East	32	28	—	—
Midlands	33	22	—	—
London North	27	21	—	—
London South	23	20	—	—
Wales and South West	22	33	—	—
North West	30	37	—	—
Scotland	22	14	—	—
National Total	189	175	141	147

Children at Risk

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what training residential social workers receive in the identification of non-accidental injuries and the protection of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985, c. *338*]: Residential social workers who hold recognised social work qualifications will have received training on work with children and families. In-service training on child abuse for both qualified and unqualified workers is provided by employing authorities. Detailed information on such training is not held centrally but the types of training available include induction training for new staff, multi-disciplinary day seminars under the auspices of the local inter-agency child abuse review committee and day release courses promoted by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work and other recognised training organisations.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Clothing and Textiles

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list total United Kingdom textile and clothing imports from the Philippines in 1984 and total Philippine textile and clothing imports from the United Kingdom in the same year;

(2) if he will list total United Kingdom textile clothing imports from India in 1984 and the total Indian textile and clothing imports from the United Kingdom in the same year;

(3) if he will list total United Kingdom textile and clothing imports from Pakistan in 1984 and total Pakistani textile and clothing imports from the United Kingdom in the same year;

(4) if he will list total United Kingdom textile and clothing imports from Turkey in 1984 and total Turkish textile and clothing imports from the United Kingdom in the same year.

Mr. Channon: The information is as follows:

Value £ million

	United Kingdom imports (cif)	*United Kingdom exports (fob)*
India	133·7	7·1
Turkey	74·2	10·8
Pakistan	41·5	12·6
Philippines	21·1	1·8

Source: Data corresponding to SITC R2 Divisions 65 and 84 (less Group 848), Groups 266 and 267 and from Sub-group 268·7, Tariff codes 5305-3100,-3811 and -3898 in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the current United Kingdom tariff on fabric imports from India and the similar Indian tariff on fabric imports from the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list the United Kingdom tariff on garment imports from India and the current Indian tariff on garments from the United Kingdom;

(3) to what extent United Kingdom garment, fabric, textile, and clothing exports to India are limited by import bans.

Mr. Channon: Imports from the United Kingdom of garments, fabrics, textiles and clothing into India are on a list of "restricted items" and are only allowed at the discretion of the Indian authorities. Information on United Kingdom tariffs on these products is available in "HM Customs and Excise Tariff", chapters 50 to 63, a copy of which is in the Library, but the broad range of tariffs is 3·5 to 17·3 per cent.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the current United Kingdom tariff on fabric imports from Pakistan and the similar Pakistani tariff on fabric imports from the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list the United Kingdom tariff on garment imports from Pakistan and the current Pakistani tariff on garment imports from the United Kingdom;

(3) to what extent United Kingdom garment, fabric, textile, and clothing exports to Pakistan are limited by import bans.

Mr. Channon: Pakistani import tariffs on fabrics lie in the broad range of 150 to 200 per cent. However, the import of most garments, fabrics, textiles and clothing into Pakistan is currently banned or severely restricted. I am placing a copy of a list of these items in the Library. Full information on United Kingdom tariffs on these products is available in "HM Customs and Excise Tariff", chapters 50 to 63, a copy of which is also in the Library, but the broad range of tariffs is 3·5 to 17·3 per cent.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the current United Kingdom tariff on fabric imports from the Philippines and the similar Philippine tariff on fabric imports from the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list the United Kingdom tariff on garment imports from the Philippines and the current Philippine tariff on garment imports from the United Kingdom;

(3) to what extent United Kingdom garment, fabric, textile and clothing exports to the Philippines are limited by import bans.

Mr. Channon: There are no formal bans on the import of garments, fabrics, textiles and clothing into the Philippines, but the import of certain of these items requires permits from various Government agencies. I am placing a list of such products in the Library. Philippine tariffs on fabrics lie in the broad range of 40 to 50 per cent. and the tariff on garments is 50 per cent. Information on United Kingdom tariffs on these products is available in "HM Customs and Excise Tariff", chapters 50 to 63, a copy of which is in the Library, but the broad range of tariffs is 3·5 to 17·3 per cent.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is the current United Kingdom tariff on fabric imports from Turkey and the similar Turkish tariff on fabric imports from the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list the United Kingdom tariff on garment imports from Turkey and the current Turkish tariff on garment imports from the United Kingdom;

(3) to what extent United Kingdom garment, fabric, textile and clothing exports to Turkey are limited by import bans.

Mr. Channon: There are no bans on imports from the United Kingdom of garments, fabrics, textiles and clothing into Turkey, although for certain of these items prior approval from the Turkish Treasury and Foreign

Trade Ministry is required. Turkish import tariffs on fabric lie in the broad range of 20 to 50 per cent. and those on garments lie in the broad range of 40 to 50 per cent. Full information on United Kingdom tariffs on these products is available in "Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Tariff", chapters 50 to 63, a copy of which is in the Library, but the broad range of tariffs is 3·5 to 17·3 per cent.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessment his Department is making of the likely effect on British industry of a Channel fixed link.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The French and United Kingdom Governments are together undertaking a detailed assessment of all aspects of the proposals received for a Channel fixed link, including the opportunities they will provide for British industry.

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assurances were given to the Government at the time of the Control Data Corporation initial investment in Systime plc as to continuity of employment and production; and if those assurances are still valid.

Mr. Butcher: None. Systime was at the time in serious financial difficulty and needed a substantial outside investment to avoid almost certain failure.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations his officials have made to the United States Government in relation to the affairs of Systime plc in Leeds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: My officials have raised the matter of United States export controls as they affect the company with the United States authorities on a number of occasions. It is not our practice to comment in detail on individual cases.

National Space Centre

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list the locations which were examined before deciding the site for the National Space Centre;

(2) why he has located the National Space Centre in London.

Mr. Pattie: Most of the elements comprising the British National Space Centre already contribute to the national space effort and they will remain at their existing locations. The bulk of the BNSC's personnel will be specialist scientific and technical staff based at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, and the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Chilton. Headquarters functions will for the present be brought together in a small unit at Millbank Tower in London. The alternative location for the headquarters, at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, was found not to be an early practical possibility owing to problems of accommodation and the need at first to work closely with the participating government departments. The ultimate location of the BNSC's headquarters will be a matter for consideration by the new director general, Mr. Roy Gibson.

Mr. Michael Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement concerning the structure, funding and objectives of the British National Space Centre.

Mr. Pattie: Last week I appointed Mr. Roy Gibson as the first director general of the British National Space Centre (BNSC). The BNSC will have two main elements: a technology directorate and a policy and programmes directorate. The technology directorate will be based on those parts of existing establishments which currently undertake space-related research, notably at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, and the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Chilton, involving the equivalent of some 100 and 140 full-time staff respectively.

The policy and programmes directorate will consist of about 35 staff forming the headquarters unit at Millbank Tower, London. These staff will be drawn from organisations participating in the centre: the Department of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Defence, the Science and Engineering Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council.

One of BNSC's principal aims will be to provide better co-ordination of Britain's £100 million a year space research and development effort, responsibility for which is presently spread amongst the participants. To this end I have asked Mr. Gibson to develop a longer-term space strategy taking into account scientific and industrial interests and the needs of both civil and defence users.

The other principal aim of BNSC will be to improve the development of space technology in the United Kingdom. BNSC will undertake a coherent programme of research and development and will provide a focus for technical support for the growing range of space users. Both users and industry will be able to participate in the management of BNSC's programmes by making contributions to them, either financial or in kind. BNSC will facilitate the development of joint programmes in the many areas which are of interest to several sections of the space community.

For the time being, Government expenditure on space will be met from departmental votes with costs lying where they currently fall. Staff working in BNSC will continue to be employed by their parent organisation with unchanged conditions of service. However, I have asked Mr. Gibson to consider future arrangements for funding and staffing the BNSC.

Life Insurance Policies

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, before reaching a final decision as to whether to seek to compel salesmen in the United Kingdom to disclose their commissions when marketing life insurance policies, he will have regard to the practice in the rest of the European Economic Community, the United States of America and the major countries of the Commonwealth; and what such information is presently available to him.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply,* 25 November 1985]: The proposals on commissions disclosure for independent life assurance intermediaries reflects the general principle in the financial services White Paper that agents should disclose their interest in a transaction. Practices in other countries are of little relevance, given the special features of the United Kingdom insurance

market, and the fact that foreign intermediaries carrying on investment business in the United Kingdom will be subject to the same disclosure obligations.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when he first became aware of possible losses to the Export Credits Guarantee Department arising out of alleged fraudulent trading by customers of Johnson Matthey Bankers and other banks;

(2) when he first became aware of possible irregularities concerning guarantees given by the Export Credits Guarantee Department in relation to trade since 1981 carried on by customers of Johnson Matthey Bankers and other banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985]: In the autumn of 1984 the Export Credits Guarantee Department asked City of London police to investigate a number of transactions where apparent irregularities relating to the Department's guarantees had come to light. Police inquiries are continuing on these and other transactions. The ECGD is co-operating fully with the police, and will continue to do so.

DEFENCE

Fylingdales

13. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to pay a visit to Fylingdales.

23. **Mr. D. E. Thomas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to visit Fylingdales early-warning station.

Mr. Heseltine: I have no immediate plans to do so.

35. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the upgrading of the radar facilities at Fylingdales.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement gave him on 30 October 1985 at column *504*.

Procurement Programme

14. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he proposes to take to extend competitive tendering with regard to defence procurement contracts.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The requirement to seek competitive tenders for defence equipment purchases whenever it is practical and sensible to do so is taken into account from the earliest stages of a project. We pay particular regard to this aspect when considering new projects. As a consequence of these actions the proportion, by value, of contracts placed following competitive tendering is increasing. At the same time we are taking steps to ensure that competitive tendering is employed to the full by our contrators when they place work at the sub-contract level.

50. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what savings he expects to make in the current year from increased competition in defence procurement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is not possible to quantify the overall savings which since the price we would otherwise have had to pay is not necessarily known. Savings in individual cases have been considerable, however, and our experience confirms that competition has a central role to play in our policy of achieving the best value for money in our defence procurement.

Communications System

15. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to why Thomson CSF of France was chosen in preference to Plessey UK as suppliers of the major United States/North Atlantic Treaty Organisation communications system.

Mr. Heseltine: GTE and Rockwell offered systems which incorporated elements provided by Thomson CSF and Plessey respectively. The American Government have told us that both systems met their requirements and that their choice was made purely on cost grounds.

Tornado Aircraft

16. **Mr. Wilkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the initiation of a mid-life update programme for the Tornado aircraft of the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Together with our Tornado partners we are currently studying options to enable Tornado to continue to meet the evolving threat through the 1990s and into the early part of the next century. These options include updating the aircraft performance, avionic fit and weapons carriage capability. Decisions on the way ahead will not be made until next year.

Cyprus Secrets Trial

17. **Sir Anthony Meyer** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is ready to make a further statement regarding the treatment of the seven service men from Cyprus recently acquitted of offences under the Official Secrets Act.

Mr. Stanley: No. It would not be right to do so during the currency of Mr. Calcutt's inquiry.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Mr. David Calcutt QC will take evidence on oath at his inquiry announced by the Minister of State for the Armed Forces on 29 October.

Mr. Stanley: In answer to the hon. Member on 29 October I said that my understanding was that Mr. Calcutt would have power to take evidence on oath but not power to compel the taking of evidence on oath. However, having taken further advice, I now understand that because Mr. Calcutt's inquiry is non-statutory, it does not have the power to administer oaths and therefore to take evidence on that basis.

Type 23 Frigate

18. **Mr. Duffy** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place the order for the next type 23 frigate.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Tenders for the next three type 23 frigates are due in mid-December 1985, but the precise size and timing of any orders have yet to be determined.

Falklands War (Medal)

19. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Falklands medals have been issued; at what cost to each recipient individual; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Some 28,000 South Atlantic medals were issued. No charge is made to recipients of campaign medals.

Emergency Powers

20. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his Department's role in emergency powers planning.

Mr. Heseltine: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister explained in answer to the hon. member for Kingston-upon-Hull, north (Mr. McNamara) on 11 November at column 50, the need for emergency legislation has been kept under review by successive Governments. My Department is naturally closely involved in this process.

General Belgrano

21. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, when he made his speech on 18 February during the debate in the House on the General Belgrano, he had seen the original draft of Sir John Nott's statement to the House of Commons of 4 May 1982.

Mr. Heseltine: I have not seen the original draft of Sir John Nott's statement of 4 may 1982, but I was of course aware that, as with most statements made to Parliament, it went through a number of drafts. These matters were gone into at great length in the autumn of 1984 and were dealt with in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's letters of 8 October and 16 November 1984 to the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). There is nothing more to be said about them.

Japanese Prisoners of War (Compensation)

22. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has had any discussions during the past six months with *(a)* the United States authorities or *(b)* the Japanese authorities concerning compensation for prisoners of war held by the Japanese at Mukden, who may have been used for testing the effects of germ and chemical warfare techniques.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the letter that my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support has recently sent to him on this matter.

Ptarmigan System

24. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Ptarmigan system is already in service with the Army; and what has been the Government's investment in it to date.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Deployment of the Ptarmigan system to BAOR commenced at the end of 1984 and it is now operational with the first of the user divisions. It is anticipated that the whole of the 1st British Corps area will be covered by the middle of next year. Spending on the project to date has been approximately £650 million.

Strategic Defence Initiative

25. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the programme of research into the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to what I said to the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 22 November at column *356*.

36. **Mr. O'Neill** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on British defence manufacturers' expected share of strategic defence initiative research.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Discussions have taken place between the United States and United Kingdom Governments, both at official and ministerial levels, to explore the potential for substantial British participation in the United States SDI research programme that would involve the defence industries, universities and research institutions. The Government are still considering the question.

42. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what defence-related technology Her Majesty's Government hope to secure as a result of participation in the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Discussions with the United States about participation in the SDI research programme have taken into account the potential for deriving advanced technologies of defence related value. The Government are still considering the question.

49. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the implications for the British independent nuclear deterrent of the development by the United States of America of the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend to the hon. Members for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) on 30 April at column 126.

51. **Mr. McNamara** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he intends to publish the agreements he has reached with the United States Department of Defence on strategic defence initiative research.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the reply I gave to the hon. Gentleman on 22 November 1985.

Nerve Weapons

26. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give an assurance that neither nerve weapons nor materials to produce such weapons will be allowed into the United Kingdom from any source whatsoever.

Mr. Stanley: The Government's policy on chemical weapons was set out in the reply my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on 10 January at column 901. There has been no change in Government policy since then. Some chemicals that could be used as precursors for chemical weapons are the same chemicals that are widely used for normal and bona fide industrial purposes and are not therefore subject to an import ban.

Nuclear Weapons

27. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the level of British nuclear weapons, in the light of the Reagan-Gorbachov summit.

Mr. Stanley: The position of the United Kingdom deterrent in relation to arms control has been made clear to the House on a number of occasions, most recently by my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary in the Debate on the Address on 8 November at column 227.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a copy of the reply from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces of 17 June to the chairperson of Christian CND on the circumstances in which nuclear weapons may lawfully be used; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Subject to the views of the recipient, my noble Friend will place a copy in the Library.

China

28. **Sir Dudley Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations he has had with the Chinese defence authorities with a view to promoting better understanding and co-operation between China and the Western European Union countries.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces visited China in 1984 and over the last two years there has been a number of reciprocal visits between British service chiefs of staff and their Chinese opposite numbers. Contacts have also taken place at lower levels and we are continuing to encourage a closer dialogue with China on a wide range of defence issues.

Swan Hunter

29. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the future warship ordering programme for Swan Hunter's shipyard.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Swan Hunter Shipbuilders has tendered, in competition, for the first two auxiliary oiler replenishment vessels. The yard has been invited to negotiate for the second type 23 frigate—in accordance with the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 28 January 1985 at column 21—and has also been invited to compete with other United Kingdom yards for the third and fourth type 23 frigate orders. The precise timing and size of the orders has yet to be determined.

Courts Martial

30. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he intends to alter the regulations regarding courts martial following the acquittal of the Cyprus airmen.

41. **Mr. Loyden** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to review the courts martial procedure.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot anticipate the outcome of the inquiry being conducted by Mr. David Calcutt, QC or of my right hon. Friend's consideration of Mr. Calcutt's report.

Regarding courts martial, I refer the hon. Member to what I said on this matter in the Second Reading debate of the Armed Forces Bill on 21 November at column 439.

Dr. Richard Wagner

31. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet Richard Wagner, Special Assistant to the United States Secretary of State for Defence, to discuss defence matters.

40. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he next plans to meet Dr. Richard Wagner, Special Assistant to the United States Secretary of State for Defence, to discuss defence matters.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn).

Crown Proceedings Act

32. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to seek to change section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act and its application to matters within his responsibility.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot at present add to the reply given to the right hon. Gentleman by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 26 July at columns *876-77*.

37. **Mr. Churchill** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is satisfied with the operation of the Crown Proceedings Act.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot at present add to the reply given to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 26 July at columns *876-77*.

Trident

33. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest estimate of the cost of the Trident project.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced an estimate of the cost of Trident of £9,285 million at 1984-85 prices and at an exchange rate of £1 = $1.38 on 29 January.

45. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Defence in what ways the Trident independent deterrent will depend on United States technology.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Trident D5 strategic weapon system, including its missiles, is to be purchased from the United States and will therefore use United States technology developed as part of their Trident programme. Co-operation with the United States on Trident in this and other areas does not affect the operational independence of the deterrent.

Cruise Missiles

34. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the disposition of United States cruise missiles in the United Kingdom has now been completed.

Mr. Stanley: The position remains as stated in the reply that I gave to the hon. Member on 26 June 1984 at column *418*.

RAF Binbrook

38. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of RAF Binbrook.

Mr. Stanley: The position remains as stated to my hon. Friend in the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement on 26 June 1984 at column 802.

Summit Meeting (Defence Implications)

39. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has had any discussion with the United States Administration about the defence implication for Britain of the outcome of the summit meeting between Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Reagan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary both attended President Reagan's briefing of the North Atlantic Council on the outcome of the meeting with Mr. Gorbachev. The Prime Minister made it clear that she was very grateful to President Reagan for his efforts to make the summit a success. We hope it will give a major impetus to arms control negotiations and to the improvement of East-West relations. I look forward to exchanging views about the outcome when I next see Mr. Weinberger.

Research and Development

43. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he is taking to commercialise the results of publicly funded defence research and development.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Commercial exploitation is sought and encouraged through the British technology group, the patenting of inventions and direct contracts between the Department and industry.

These arrangements are now complemented by the activities of Defence Technology Enterprises, a private sector company established as a joint initiative with the specific purpose of identifying ideas with commercial potential and arranging for their exploitation.

Civil Aircraft

44. **Mr. McWilliam** asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil aircraft he has on lease for Ministry of Defence purposes.

Mr. Stanley: There are no leased civil aircraft which are flown and operated by Ministry of Defence personnel. However, there are many contracts with civil aircraft operators for such services as the carriage of Ministry of Defence passengers and freight, and target towing, where the operator both provides the aircraft and operates it.

Royal Dockyards

46. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the consultations between his Department and trade unions on the future of the royal dockyards.

Mr. Lee: The future of the royal dockyards has been discussed at industrial and non-industrial Whitley committee meetings at both national and local level. In addition, a consultation group has been set up within the Department, chaired by the under-secretary heading the dockyard planning team; this is being used as a forum for discussing the future of the dockyards with trades unions at national level.

Chemical Weapons

47. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the number and type of chemical weapons held by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and what information he has as to the level of training members of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' armed forces have in the use of such weapons.

Mr. Stanley: The USSR has a major chemical warfare capability. Its chemical weapon stockpile is assessed to include some 300,000 tonnes of nerve agent alone. The Soviet Union possesses the means to deliver chemical weapons against targets throughout western Europe, including the United Kingdom. It has some 90,000 specialist troops responsible for aspects of nuclear, biological and chemical warfare. Soviet forces are also comprehensively equipped and trained to operate in a chemically contaminated environment.

A new United States non-classified assessment, with which Her Majesty's Government are generally in agreement, entitled "Soviet Chemical Weapons Threat", has recently been published by the United States Defence Intelligence Agency, and I have placed a copy in the Library.

"Highway Code"

48. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department gives advice to visiting forces about adherence to the "Highway Code" during military exercises conducted in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Defence what advice his Department gives to visiting forces about adhering to the "Highway Code" during military exercises in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) earlier today.

Helicopters

52. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the Wessex V and Puma replacement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the answer which I gave to the hon. Members for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) and for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) on 22 October at columns 129-31.

Defence Expenditure

53. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans to conduct a review of defence expenditure.

Mr. Heseltine: Defence expenditure is kept under continuing review, particularly at this time of the year when detailed plans have to be reconciled with available cash.

Iran and Iraq

54. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a policy statement on arms sales to Iran and Iraq.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 29 October 1985 at column 454.

NATO

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has evaluated or received evaluations of the military implications of incorporating seven USAF B-52 bomber aircraft, based at RAF Fairford, in NATO's recent Cold Fire and Display Determination exercises conducted with the Autumn Forge programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The B-52 aircraft concerned were temporarily deployed to RAF Fairford for exercise purposes. My right hon. Friend did not receive, nor would he expect to receive, evaluations of the specific part played by the forces of an allied nation in these multinational NATO exercises.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he has participated in the recent intensification in planning for the redeployment of large strategic bombers in NATO's follow on force attack doctrine; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has consulted the United States Government and other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies about plans to incorporate European-based United States air force B-52 bomber aircraft into the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's follow on forces attack doctrine and deployments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Follow on force attack is a NATO long-term planning guideline aimed at improving NATO's ability to counter by conventional means one aspect of the Warsaw pact threat, namely, that posed by follow-on-forces. It is not directly concerned with NATO deployments. Responsibility for detailed operational planning within NATO is a matter for the major NATO commanders, and it is not in any case our practice to comment on such planning.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secetary of State for Defence if he has been consulted by the United States Government and other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies with regard to the supplementation of existing European F111 and Tornado aircraft deployments with United States air force B52 bomber aircraft deployments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Unlike F111 and Tornado aircraft, which are based permanently in the United Kingdom in peace time, B52 aircraft deploy to the United Kingdom in peace time only temporarily for exercises in connection with their conventional role. Proposals for these exercise deployments are subject to the prior approval of Her Majesty's Government.

El Salvador

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any officers from El Salvador are currently being trained under his Department in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) on 25 October at column 275.

Soviet Ballistic Missiles

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the latest information available to his Department about Soviet ballistic missile defence activity.

Mr. Stanley: I have today placed in the Library of the House a paper prepared by the Ministry of Defence, the text of which is as follows:

The Soviet Ballistic Missile Defence Programme

Introduction

1. The 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, as amended by a 1974 Protocol, allows the United States and the Soviet Union to deploy one static ABM system with up to 100 launchers in defence of either an intercontinental ballistic missile silo field or the national capital. Development, testing or deployment of sea, air, space or mobile land-based ABM systems or components is forbidden although research into such systems is not precluded. If "ABM systems based on other physical principles and including components capable of substituting for ABM interceptor missiles, ABM launchers or ABM radars" are created there is an obligation under the 'Agreed Inter pretations' of the Treaty for the signatories to enter into discussions aimed at limiting those systems.

The Soviet Position

2. The Soviet Union has the only deployed ABM system in the world. It is currently being upgraded and when completed will consist of 100 static launchers sited around Moscow, the maximum permitted under the 1972 ABM Treaty. The system will comprise a mix of the existing GALOSH missiles, which are nuclear tipped and designed to intercept their target outside the atmosphere, and the newer high acceleration vehicles (HAV) which are designed to intercept missiles after they have re-entered the atmosphere. This system will enable discrimination against all but the most elaborate penetration aids and will, when deployment is completed in the late 1980's provide a limited two layer ABM defence system around Moscow. The missiles are supported by a chain of early warning radars, and surveillance and target acquisition radars with target tracking and missile control radars in the Moscow area.

3. In addition, the Soviet Union has the world's only deployed anti-satellite (ASAT) system, a space-based orbital interceptor of limited capability. Although operational since the early 1970s the system has been tested on various occasions, not always successfully, and not since 1982.

Soviet Research Programme

4. An examination of Soviet research programmes indicates that mature research programmes are under way in most of the fields—directed energy weapons, heavy lift space capability, pointing and tracking, surveillance and target detection—which could contribute to a defence capability against ballistic missiles.

a. Lasers. The Soviet Union has an extensive R&D programme underway on high energy lasers which dates from the mid 1960s, is carried out at over half a dozen major R&D facilities, and employs more than 10,000 scientists and engineers. It includes research into three types of gas lasers, the gas dynamic laser, the electric discharge laser and the chemical laser, and also other types

including the excimer and free electron laser. Development of high energy lasers could include those intended for close-range defence of ships at sea, defence of high-value strategic targets in the Soviet Union and for air defence of theatre forces. An airborne laser has also been tested which could have ASAT or air defence applications, and the testing of a ground based laser which could be a prototype ASAT weapon has taken place.

b. Particle Beam and Radio Frequency Weapons. There is a vigorous R&D programme into particle beam weapons which could lead to a protype space based system by the late 1990s. Research into radio frequency weapons is also taking place. These have the potential to interfere with components of missiles, satellites or re-entry vehicles. Testing of ground based radio frequency weapons capable of damaging satellites could take place in the mid 1990s.

c. Kinetic Energy Weapons use as a kill mechanism the high speed collision of a small mass with the target. The Soviet Union has a number of longstanding research programmes in this field including research and development of electromagnetic railguns to accelerate projectiles to extra high velocities. There is however no evidence of work on space based systems.

d. Surveillance and Target Detection. The Soviet Union possesses a launch detection system based on a satellite borne infra-red sensor in a highly elliptic orbit. It covers US inter-continental ballistic missile launches but in its present form is not capable of detecting submarine launched ballistic missile launches. An experimental geostationary satellite aimed at improving the performance of the current system has been launched and there is a strong research programme to improve capabilities in this field.

e. Pointing and Tracking. Any effective defensive system against ballistic missiles would require pointing and tracking accuracies of the order of 1 metre at ranges of 1,000km to achieve high enough energy densities. Research is continuing in this field associated with the Soviet space programme but major advances would be necessary to provide the Soviet Union with adequate capabilities for weapons systems.

f. Space Capability. All the space borne elements of a ballistic missile defence system will require adequate facilities for their launch. The Soviet Union has eight space launch systems which are used to place objects in orbit and are developing two more, a medium lift launch vehicle and a heavy lift launch vehicle. They are also developing an equivalent to the US Shuttle. The new heavy lift vehicle should be able to lift as much as 150 tonnes into low earth orbit, adequate to launch the components needed for a large manned space complex or elements of space based weapons systems. With their manned space programmes they are also acquiring experience or maintaining complex platforms in space.

g. Command and Control. The most serious deficiency in Soviet capability is in the electronic systems required to manage the operations involved in detecting, tracking and recording all the missile movements covered by a ballistic missile defence system.

The Soviet Response to SDI

5. The Soviet propaganda response to SDI has been outright condemnation, on the grounds that such a system would be destabilising, but it has also accepted that it would have to counter it in some manner. In the most authoritative statement so far Minister of Defence, Marshal Sokolov, on 4 May 1985 said that the Soviet Union would have no choice but to take 'countermeasures' if the United States started to undermine the "existing strategic-military equilibrium" by deploying weapons in space. He also acknowledged that the Soviet Union had a military space research programme but said that this was only for perfecting space early warning, reconnaissance, communication and navigation systems.

6. Marshal Akhromeyev, Soviet Chief of the General Staff and General Chervov, a leading arms control spokesman, have subsequently elaborated on Sokolov's statements. Akhromeyev said that the "limitation, still less the reduction, of nuclear arms is inconceivable in conditions of the militarisation of space". The Soviet Union would be "forced to build up its own strategic offensive forces, supplementing them by means of defence". Chervov added more detail in a Press interview, suggesting that Soviet efforts will not attempt to match the United States space based SDI programme—"we will not ape the United States in spending billions on space systems"—but will seek a lower cost solution.

7. An account of the United States and Soviet positions on ballistic missile defence in relation to the current Geneva arms control talks can be found in the FCO/MOD Defence and Disarmament leaflets Nos. 16 and 17.

Conclusions

8. Despite its criticism of the United States SDI programme the Soviet Union has long standing research programmes examining new technologies with weapons potential which are generally relevant to ballistic missile defence. The future size and shape of Soviet ballistic missile defence is impossible to predict but current research and development programmes provide capabilities to develop SDI type systems if required.

SkyNet Satellite System

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of each satellite in the SkyNet satellite system; and from which service Vote it will come.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The cost of each satellite in the current SkyNet programme is approximately £45 million at today's prices. The cost will fall on defence Vote 2.

RAF Policing Policy

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to review RAF policing policy with respect to charging and detaining RAF personnel.

Mr. Stanley: There are no present plans to review RAF policy on these matters. I cannot, of course, anticipate the outcome of the inquiry being carried out by Mr. David Calcutt QC which I announced in my statement on 29 October.

Colombia (Rescue Operations)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there were any delays in RAF flights to Colombia to assist in rescue operations as a result of difficulties in negotiating overflying rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I will answer shortly.

Overseas Defence Contracts

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he proposes to take to assist British manufacturers in winning defence contracts overseas.

Mr. Heseltine: The Government continue to provide strong support for the sale of British defence equipment overseas wherever this is compatible with our wider political and security interests.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 November 1985

TRANSPORT

London Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there are any plans to extend the London docklands light railway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: London Regional Transport has today with my consent presented a Bill to provide powers to extend to the City the docklands light railway, now under construction. This extension would link the railway to LTR's Bank underground station. The extension would be mostly below ground.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and I have been considering ways to involve the private sector in ownership and operation of the docklands light railway. The consortium which plans to develop Canary wharf on the Isle of Dogs and which comprises companies associated with and backed by Credit Suisse First Boston, Morgan Stanley International and First Boston International has told me that it regards the extension to the Bank as essential for its project. An understanding has now been reached with it that it will contribute £30 million towards the construction of the extension and, unless others come forward, secure underwriting of an agreed privatisation scheme. My right hon. Friend and I have endorsed this understanding. The consortium is bearing LRT's costs in the Bill.

There will be opportunity for other people who are interested in owning and operating the extended railway to put forward alternatives to the consortium's proposals.

The railway, at present under construction, is being financed by the Government through London Regional Transport and the London Docklands Development Corporation at a capital cost of £77 million. The prime purpose is to facilitate the development of docklands. It is not expected to generate a financial return on the capital invested and the Government therefore intend to offer it to any appropriate person who is prepared to construct the City extension, on terms that the Government retain a shareholding representing its investment, which will be remunerated if profits from the combined railway reach a sufficient level. The railway will revert to the ownership of LRT if, for any reason, the City extension fails to be completed.

The arrangements that I have described represent a sufficient understanding for the Bill to be deposited by the date specified by the Standing Orders. They are subject to final agreement between LRT and the consortium on the detailed design and costs of the City extension, and on the particulars of the privatisation scheme, and to the completion of a master building agreement between the consortium and the LDDC on the Canary wharf development, as well as to the consent of Parliament to the Bill.

Work will now proceed to settle the detailed design and forecast costs of the Bank extension before Second Reading of the Bill. Meanwhile, I am delightd that there is now a real prospect for the successful involvement of the private sector in a major piece of rail infrastructure in our capital city.

ENERGY

British Gas

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the total share of the energy market which British Gas has had in each of the last five years compared with that of North sea oil, the National Coal Board and the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The percentage shares of United Kingdom final consumption of fuels and electricity covered by sales of gas by the British Gas Corporation and by electricity supplied by the Central Electricity Generating Board for the latest five complete years are as follows:

Percent	*1984*	*1983*	*1982*	*1981*	*1980*
British Gas Corporation	30	29	29	28	28
Central Electricity Generating Board*	11	11	11	11	11

* Direct sales or via Area Boards. The figures include a small element of estimation.

The corresponding contributions to final consumption of fuels and electricity from coal supplied by the National Coal Board and from United Kingdom North sea oil are not available on a comparable basis. Large quantities of NCB coal do not enter final consumption, but are used with imported coal for electricity generation and for the production of coke and other manufactured solid fuels. Similarly imported oils are used with United Kingdom North sea crude oil in refineries to manufacture products for inland consumption. In both cases it is not possible to identify separately the contributions made by the imported and home supply to the products finally consumed.

Electricity Boards (Appliance Repairs)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will make a statement on area electricity boards' appliance repair activities.

Mr. Goodlad: As I told the House on 25 July, at column 700, in the light of comments by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in its report on the South Wales electricity board, I have been discussing with the Electricity Council whether it might be appropriate for area boards to adopt any new accounting arrangements for the repair business. The council has now decided that from 1985-86 boards will publish in their annual accounts four key indicators of performance in this activity: figures for turnover, operating profit or loss, average net current cost capital employed and the percentage return on that capital. The council has also indicated that boards will aim to run this business on a profitable basis.

This measure usefully complements the arrangements for appliance retailing and electrical contracting which were announced by my right hon. Friend last year on 26 July 1984, at column 757. The Government welcome the

contribution that this new step will make towards improving boards' accountability and demonstrating that they are trading fairly in the ancillary activities which they pursue.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Parkhurst Prison

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many habitable cells are to be provided in C wing at Parkhurst prison; and if it is intended to keep any cells unoccupied on a permanent basis.

Mr. Mellor: The work currently being undertaken in C wing at Parkhurst will produce a total of 100 cells, of which 59 will be in the therapeutic unit and 41 in the adjoining rule 43 unit. All the accommodation in the rule 43 unit is expected to permanently occupied. The population of the therapeutic unit will be restricted initially to 30, probably rising in due course to about 35, which is considered to be the right size for a unit of this kind, having regard to the type of inmate to be held there. The additional space and flexibility will play an important part in the management of the therapeutic unit.

Parole

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were released on parole licence in 1984; and what percentage of those were recalled.

Mr. Mellor: I regret the information is not available in the form requested. The number of inmates granted parole in 1984 was 11,886. The number of licences revoked in the same year was 512, but a proportion of these will have been in cases where a prisoner was released on licence before 1984.

Immigration (Photographic Records)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce photographic records of each person entering the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: Photographs are not taken of persons entering the United Kingdom, and we have no plans to introduce such an arrangement.

Shops Bill

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the terms of the Shops Bill *[Lords]* from individuals and organisations; if he will indicate which of those were opposed to the Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Few representations have been received as yet which relate specifically to the terms of the Shops Bill, but we have received much correspondence from organisations and individuals on Sunday trading, most of it including arguments against the complete abolition of statutory restrictions.

BBC (Engineering Services)

Mr. Ron Davies: asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has discussed the future of the British Broadcasting corporation's engineering services with the director-general.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. The management of its engineering services is entirely a matter for the corporation.

Hijackers (Asylum)

Mr. Dicks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the two hijackers Yassil Membar and Mohammed Tahir Ahmed who brought an aeroplane to Stansted in 1983 and have now been released from prison have been allowed to remain in the United Kingdom; whether they will be allowed to draw social security benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We have refused applications for asylum made by Mr. Membar and Mr. Ahmed, but decided that to return them to Tanzania against their will would be inconsistent with undertakings given to them at the time to the hijacking. These undertakings were confirmed in writing on 29 April, 1982 after the hijack was over to my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall). They have accordingly been given exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom for 12 months. Eligibility for social security benefits is a matter for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Glenn Pearson

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which institution Mr. Glenn Pearson of Hansard cresent, Caister, Lancashire, has been placed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: On 19 November, at Lincoln Crown court, Glenn Pearson was found unfit to plead, under the Criminal Procedure (Insanity) Act 1964, to a charge of burglary. On 26 November the same court directed his admission to Harmston Hall hospital as a place of safety, under schedule 1 to the Act, pending the Home Secretary's direction under section 5 on his longer term hospital placement.

Miss Elizabeth Keays (Burglary)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Pudsey (Mr. Shaw), has been unable to reply to the letter sent by the hon. Member for Linlithgow, of 14 October, acknowledged on 28 October, about the statements attributed to a detective sergeant of the Metropolitan police, asserting that a news blackout had been imposed by 10 Downing street on the burglary in November 1983 of the flat of Elizabeth Keays.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The hon. Member will now have received the letter to him from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in reply to his letter of 14 October, and I have nothing to add to that.

Community Radio

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications have been received for the experimental community radio licences; and if he will make available the names and addresses of the applicants.

Mr. Hurd: Preliminary scrutiny of the applications received by the closing date of 31 October has shown there to be a total of 266 applications for the 21 experimental licences (some for more than one licence), as follows:

	Number of applications
Small neighbourhood stations in	
Aylesbury	5
Calderdale	2
Dumfries	2
Cambridge	4
Colchester	5
Lincoln	6
London (three stations)	83
Penzance	3
Purbeck	2
Solihull	9
Rhondda	1
Rutland	3
Sunderland	3
Wirral	6
Large neighbourhood stations in	
North West Wales	11
Shetland islands	2
Community of interest stations in	
Greater Manchester	16
North London	69
South London	34
Total	266

I have placed in the Library a full list of the names and addresses of the contacts specified on each application form. Copies of, or extracts from, the list are being made available on request, to the press and other interested parties.

The advisory panel on community radio, which will advise on selection of the successful applicants, is now considering the applications. The panel hopes to be able to make recommendations to me in January.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Shopping Centre Investment

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will detail the exact investment by the Church Commissioners' asset committee in the new shopping centres in St. Enoch, Glasgow, Ipswich and Gateshead; if he will give the names of any principal shopping chain that might be participating in that investment; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners' total investment in the three shopping centres is likely to be in the order of £120 million. Sears Holdings is to participate in the development of the centre at St. Enoch's, Glasgow.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Laws

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to alter current planning laws.

Mr. Tracey: The Gracious Speech from the Throne announced the intention to introduce measures to improve the planning system. The main matters to be included were noted in paragraphs 3.6(i) and (v) and 3.7 of the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden", (Cmnd. 9571), published on 16 July.

Co-operative Promotion Allowance

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the £2,100 per scheme co-operative promotion allowance.

Mr. John Patten: The level of co-operative promotion allowance for 1986-87 is currently being considered as part of the annual review of all housing association grant allowances. The current rates are £2,135 per scheme for projects in the provinces and £3,522 per scheme in London. The rates to take effect from 1 April 1986 will be promulgated early in 1986.

Refuse Collection

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to amend section 72 of the Public Health Act 1936 to increase the compensation which householders may apply for when a local authority is in default of its statutory obligation to collect household refuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. This would not be appropriate at a time when we are considering the bringing into force of the provisions of sections 12 to 14 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974. When these provisions have been brought into force they will replace the corresponding ones of the Public Health Act 1936, and a remedy for default by a local authority will be available under section 97.

Water Supplies (Yorkshire and Humberside)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the water supply in the Yorkshire and Humberside region can be described as falling below the standard laid down by the European Economic Community.

Mr. John Patten: About one third of the water supplied by the Yorkshire water authority falls below the standard laid down in the EC drinking water directive. This proportion will be substantially reduced in the next few years. A further 12 per cent. is softened at times below the minimum specified in the directive to ensure compatibility with naturally soft water from Pennine sources. Information is not available for the Yorkshire and Humberside region, as the economic region and the water authority areas differ.

Southgate Housing Estate, Runcorn

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between his Department and the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation concerning the possible sale of the Southgate housing estate to a private developer; and whether he is satisfied that the residents of the estate have been adequately informed and consulted about the proposals.

Mr. Tracey: Officials of my Department have had preliminary discussions with officers of the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation about proposals to

transfer ownership of the Southgate housing estate at Runcorn to a permanent landlord body, and to secure private finance for major improvements. Tenants had advance notice of the issue of a disposal prospectus earlier this year. Public meetings have bee held by the corporation to keep tenants informed of progress. Two offers have been received and these are now being considered and discussed with the prospective purchasers. When there is a firm proposal, tenants will be fully consulted. My right hon. Friend will not accept any proposal which does not include substantial protection of the tenants' existing rights.

Local Authority Property Sales

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about cases in which local authorities have planned to dispose of rundown blocks of flats or estates to private developers after arranging alternative accommodation for any remaining tenants and in which problems have arisen in connection with *(a)* the power to make home loss payments and *(b)* the power to gain possession of the dwellings.

Sir George Young: During informal discussions and formal consultations on the proposed new ground for possession, representations were made by various local authorities about general difficulties in obtaining possession when the properties were to be sold for redevelopment, in the absence of specific powers to obtain possession and to make home loss payments. Specific examples of difficulties in obtaining possession or paying home loss payments have been put to the Department by the following local authorities:

Langbaurgh council
Oldham borough council
Wandsworth borough council
South Tyneside borough council
Solihull borough council
City of Westminster
Burnley council

Smith-built Properties (Report)

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make available the report by the Building Research Establishment following the examination of some Smith-built properties in the constituency of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, West.

Mr. John Patten: As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Lady of 12 November, at column 119, I hope to make an announcement shortly on the question of designation of Smith houses under the Housing Defects Act. I propose to make the Building Research Establishment's report on Smith houses in West Bromwich available at the time of that announcement.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Spina Bifida

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence he has on the efficacy of vitamin supplementation in the prevention of spina bifida.

Mr. Walden: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply of 25 November, at column *399*, to questions from the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody).

SCOTLAND

Disabled People (Aids)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what other research into the areas for further study in chapter 6.1 of the working party report on prostheses, ortheses and aids for the disabled which he published in 1983 has taken place; and if he will state the outcome.

Mr. John MacKay: The areas of study referred to in the report relate predominantly to matters of local service. There is no central record of any research which may have been carried out into these matters by health boards or by local authorities.

The committee for research and equipment for the disabled of the Chief Scientist's Office, Scottish Home and Health Department, is undertaking a major survey of aids and equipment for the disabled which will provide some indirect information on numbers of disabled.

Prosthetic and Orthotic Services

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many rehabilitation engineering centres of prosthetic aids exist in Scotland; and how many others are planned.

Mr. John MacKay: The only centre in Scotland of which I am aware is the Tayside rehabilitation engineering service, Dundee. It is for health boards to decide whether they wish to set up such units.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what programmes exist to evaluate United Kingdom-produced orthotic and prosthetic aids.

Mr. John MacKay: All orthotic and prosthetic aids supplied through the National Health Service are assessed for safety and reliability by the scientific and technical branch of the Department of Health and Social Security. In addition, the Scottish Home and Health Department committee for research on equipment for the disabled awards grants to Scottish projects designed to develop and/or evaluate prosthetic or orthotic devices.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to link the prosthetic and orthotic services.

Mr. John MacKay: Prosthetic and orthotic services are provided by health boards. It is for them to take decisions on whether it would be appropriate for the services to be linked in their areas. This has been largely achieved in the Tayside health board area.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent orthopaedic units are associated with hospital-based orthotic units in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: Fourteen of the 15 hospital-based orthotics units in Scotland are associated with orthopaedic units. The exception is the orthotics unit at the Gilbert Bain hospital, Lerwick.

Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976

Mr. Hill asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' survey of the effect of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 is to be published.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. Friend expects that the results of the survey will be published in February 1986.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Act

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action his Department has taken over the past year to seek to ensure that local authorities are fulfilling their duties under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Act.

Mr. John MacKay: It is for local authorities themselves to decide how to discharge their responsibilities under the Act subject to any general guidance which my right hon. Friend may provide. I have no reason to think that they are failing to meet the needs which they have identified in their areas.

Wren Skyships

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much venture capital has been raised from the Scottish Development Agency for Wren Skyships.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No venture capital has been raised from the agency.

Mergansers and Goosanders

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what evidence he has that mergansers and goosanders cause serious damage to fishing.

Mr. John MacKay: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland published a paper in 1962 in the freshwater and salmon fisheries research series entitled "The Goosander and Red-Breasted Merganser as Predators of Salmon in Scottish Waters". In this publication the effects of those species on Atlantic salmon in Scotland were assessed and it was concluded that these species are, in some circumstances, harmful to trout and young salmon in freshwater. In considering applications for licences to shoot these birds, my Department takes account of the evidence provided by applicants as to the extent of damage to the fisheries.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration is given to the views of conservationist organisations on the protection of species before licences are granted to permit the shooting of goosanders and mergansers; and how many of these species were shot in 1984.

Mr. John MacKay: As required by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, my right hon. Friend consults the Nature Conservancy Council from time to time as to the circumstances in which licences should be granted to permit the shooting of goosanders and mergansers for the purpose of preventing serious damage to fisheries. The advice of the council is fully considered before policy decisions are taken.

The numbers of goosanders and mergansers reported shot in 1984 under licences granted by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland were 514 and 516, respectively.

DEFENCE

Mhari-L

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will arrange for the wreck of the Mhari-L to be raised.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. My Department has no responsibility for the removal of wrecks.

Nuclear Tests (South Pacific)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian personnel were involved in the nine nuclear weapon tests near Christmas Island in the South Pacific; what records have been kept regarding their health standards since; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: About 1,000 civilian personnel were involved in the atmospheric test programme near Christmas Island. Most of them were employed by the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston. No special records have been kept regarding their health standards since in addition to normal employee medical records. Their details are being made available to the National Radiological Protection Board, for the board to consider them for inclusion in its study.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make available to right hon. and hon. Members the reports of the studies carried out on the test veterans involved in the nuclear weapon tests on Christmas Island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The National Radiological Protection Board is carrying out a study of the participants in the United Kingdom atmospheric nuclear weapon test programmes, including the tests in Australia and those near Christmas Island. The study is not expected to be completed until October 1986. It is intended that the findings will be made generally available.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many military personnel were involved in the nine nuclear weapon tests near Christmas Island, in the South Pacific, what records have been kept regarding their health standards since; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over 20,000 service personnel were involved in the entire British atmospheric nuclear weapon test programme, including 12 tests in Australia and or near Christmas Island. No special records have been kept regarding their health standards since in addition to normal service medical records. Their details are being made available to the National Radiological Protection Board. for the board to consider them for inclusion in its study.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of sheep carcases brought into service kitchens in the Falklands has been declared unfit for human consumption.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None, but some carcases (under 5 per cent.) are rejected at the abattoir.

Royal Naval Establishment, Bath

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any plans to relocate the Royal Naval establishment in Bath to the Royal Marines barracks at Eastney, Portsmouth.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Civilian Personnel (Relocation)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian personnel will be affected by the relocation of service establishments from the south to the north.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As yet it has not been determined which service establishments might be relocated from the south to the north. This is a matter for review as opportunities arise, such as when major investment is required, but all proposals will need to stand on their economic and operational merits. Only when specific cases are considered will it be possible to assess the numbers of civilians to be affected.

Royal Marines Barracks, Portsmouth

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the future of the Royal Marines barracks, Portsmouth.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, announced on 21 June 1985, at column 248, that it was envisaged that the major part of the Royal Marines barracks, Eastney, would close, subject to further study and to the outcome of consultation. This study and consultation are continuing, and an announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Scientists and Technicians (Pay)

Mr. Warren asked the Secretary of State for Defence which grades of scientists and technicians at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment and the royal ordnance factory at Burghfield have received pay increases of up to 26 per cent.; what were the costs involved; whether there have been any consequent difficulties regarding differentials with other grades of staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Special pay additions (SPAs) have been introduced at the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Aldermaston, and the nearby royal ordnance factory at Burghfield in order to alleviate manning shortages in certain categories. The SPAs are payable from 1 October 1985 to engineers between the grades of professional and technology officer IV and professional and technology officers I, and to scientists between the grades of assistant scientific officer and senior scientific officer. The amounts range between £1,000 and £2,000 a year depending upon grade. The cost in a full year will be some £3 million. Other staff at these establishments have sought similar treatment.

Bases and Facilities

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will list the location by parliamentary

constituency of *(a)* all United States non-nuclear bases in the United Kingdom and *(b)* all United Kingdom non-nuclear bases in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of *(a)* all Royal Air Force facilities in the United Kingdom and *(b)* all United States bases and facilities in the United Kingdom;

(3) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of *(a)* all royal ordnance factories, *(b)* all royal dockyards and *(c)* all Ministry of Defence facilities, itemising them also;

(4) if he will list the location by parliamentary constituency of *(a)* all Army barracks and *(b)* all Royal Navy bases in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 November 1985, c. *199*]: The following bases and facilities have been made available for use by United States forces in the United Kingdom. It is a longstanding convention of this and previous Governments not to confirm or deny the presence of nuclear weapons at any location; accordingly, the role of bases and facilities are not specified in this respect.

	Constituency
Main Operating Base	
RAF Alconbury	Huntingdon
RAF Bentwaters	Suffolk, Coastal
RAF Fairford	Cirencester and Tewkesbury
RAF Lakenheath	Bury St. Edmunds
RAF Mildenhall	Bury St. Edmunds
RAF Upper Heyford	Banbury
RAF Woodbridge	Suffolk, Coastal
Holy Loch	Argyll and Bute
Standby Deployment Bases	
RAF Greenham Common(1)	Newbury
RAF Scunthorpe	Norfolk, North
RAF Wethersfield	Braintree
Storage/Support Facilities	
RAF Bicester	Banbury
Bramley	Basingstoke
RAF Brawdy	Pembroke
Broughton Moor	Workington
RAF Burtonwood	Warrington, North
RAF Caerwent	Monmouth
RAF Chelveston	Bedfordshire, North
RAF Chilwell	Broxtowe
Eastcote	Ruislip-Northwood
Felixstowe	Suffolk, Coastal
RAF Feltwell	Norfolk, South-West
Framlingham	Suffolk, Coastal
Glen Douglas	Dumbarton
High Wycombe Air Station (Daws Hill)	Wycombe
RAF Hullavington	Wiltshire, North
RAF Hythe	Romsey and Waterside
RAF Kemble	Cirencester and Tewkesbury
London USN Europe HQ	City of London and Westminster, South
RAF Machrihanish	Argyll and Bute
Marchwood	Romsey and Waterside
RAF Molesworth(2)	Huntingdon
Oakington	Cambridgeshire, South-East
Ridgewell	Saffron Walden
RAF Ruislip	Ruislip-Northwood
RAF Spadeadam	Penrith and The Border
RAF St. Mawgan	Cornwall, North
RAF Upwood	Huntingdon
RAF Welford	Newbury
RAF Walton	Norfolk, South-West
Contingency Wartime Hospitals	
RAF Chessington(3)	Surbiton
RAF Little Rissington	Cirencester and Tewkesbury
RAF Nocton Hall	Grantham
Communications Facilities	
Aberdeen	Kincardine and Deeside
RAF Barford St. John	Banbury
RAF Barkway	Hertfordshire, North
Botley Hill	Surrey, East
Bovingdon	Hertfordshire, South-West
RAF Chicksands	Mid-Bedfordshire
Coldblow	Mid-Kent
Christmas Common	Henley
RAF Croughton	Daventry
Daventry	Daventry
Dunkirk	Canterbury
RAF Edzell	Kincardine and Deeside
RAF Fylingdales	Ryedale
Great Bromley	Colchester, North
RAF Inverbervie	Kincardine and Deeside
RAF Kinnabeer	Angus, East
Latheron	Caithness and Sutherland
Martlesham	Suffolk, Coastal
Menwith Hill	Skipton and Ripon
Mormond Hill	Banff and Buchan
Fort Murkle	Caithness and Sutherland
RAF Uxbridge	Uxbridge

Notes

(1) Also base for ground-launched cruise missiles.

(2) Planned GLCM base as well as storage and property disposal facility used by the United States Department of Defence.

(3) RAF Chessington has recently been made available for use by the United States army as a peacetime storage facility and as a war time hospital.

Records of the locations of bases and facilities used by the Ministry of Defence and the armed services bases and facilities are not maintained in the form requested, and I regret that this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Royal ordnance factories are located in the following constituencies:

	Constituency
Royal ordnance factory, Burghfield	Newbury
Royal ordnance factory, Cardiff	Cardiff North

The following factories and facilities were transferred to Royal Ordnance plc on 2 January 1985. I am advised that they are located in the following constituencies:

	Constituency
Birtley	Blaydon
Bishopton	Renfrew, West and Inverclyde
Blackburn	Rossendale and Darwen
Bridgwater	Bridgwater
Chorley	Chorley
Enfield	Enfield, North
Featherstone	Staffordshire, South
Glascoed	Monmouth
Leeds	Leeds, East
Nottingham	Nottingham, South
Patricroft	Eccles
Powfoot	Dumfries
Radway Green	Congleton
Summerfield	Wyre Forest
Waltham Abbey	Epping Forest
Westcott	Buckingham

The royal dockyards are situated in the following constituencies:

	Constituency
Rosyth	Dunfermline, East
Devonport	Plymouth, Devonport

THE ARTS

Museums

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to change the status of any museums from local to national as a result of the abolition of the metropolitan county councils.

Mr. Luce: The Government's plans for the future funding of major museums and art galleries affected by the abolition of the metropolitan county councils were outlined in their reply of 31 July 1984 (a copy of which is in the Library of the House) to the first report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and the Arts, 1983-84 Session.

A trustee body is to be established by Order in Council under section 46 of the Local Government Act 1985, to take over responsibility for the bulk of the museum and art gallery service hitherto maintained by Merseyside county council, and will be centrally funded directly by the Office of Arts and Libraries. The only other museum to be centrally funded directly by the OAL is the Greater Manchester museum of science and industry, already constituted as an independent charitable trust. The arrangements for other major museums and galleries will be as set out in the reply of 31 July 1984. Responsibility for institutions not listed therein will pass to the appropriate successor local authorities.

Arts Council (Supply Estimates)

Mr. Lawrence asked the Minister for the Arts if there has been any change in the Arts Council's expected commitment figures for 1985-86 as shown at page 24 of the class V volume of the Supply Estimates.

Mr. Luce: When the Supply Estimates were published in March 1985 a provisional table was included. The corrected figures are shown. The total of the grant-in-aid is not affected by the correction.

Arts Council of Great Britain

	£000	*1985-86 provision £000*
A1 England		84,492
(1) General Expenditure on the Arts		80,096
(a) Royal Opera House, Covent Garden Limited; English National Opera; National Theatre Board; and Royal Shakespeare Theatre	30,330	
(b) Regional Arts Associations	12,892	
(c) Music, Opera and Dance	15,828	
(d) Drama	14,579	
(e) Art and Arts Films	3,920	
(f) Literature	518	
(g) Combined Arts	1,229	
(h) Training in the Arts and Education	800	
(2) Administration and Operational Expenditure		4,395
Unallocated		—
A2 Scotland		
(1) General Expenditure on the Arts		11,997
(a) Music, Opera and Dance	6,548	
(b) Drama	2,517	
(c) Art and Film	1,062	
(d) Literature	515	
(e) Arts Centres, Regional Projects and Festivals	1,355	
(2) Administration and Operational Expenditure		743
Unallocated		—
A3 Wales		7,139
(1) General Expenditure on the Arts		6,524
(a) Music, Opera and Dance	2,651	
(b) Drama	1,728	
(c) Art	641	
(d) Literature	606	
(e) Arts associations, Arts Centres and Regional Projects	898	
(2) Administration and Operational Expenditure		615
Unallocated		—
A4 Housing the Arts		1,230
A5 South Bank		400
Total		106,000

Reconciliation

	£ million
Commitments outstanding from 1984-85	10·9
Commitments expected to be made in 1985-86	106·0
Total	116·9
Balance to be met in 1986-87 or subsequent years	11·9
Grant in aid 1985-86	105·0

WALES

Mentally Handicapped Children

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what procedure exists to ensure that when local service departments of local authorities in England place mentally handicapped children into private residential accommodation in Wales there is adequate co-ordination between those authorities and the social service departments in the area in which the accommodation is located; and who is responsible for monitoring standards of care;

(2) if he is satisfied with the operation of the statutory provisions to enable private residential houses for mentally handicapped children in Wales to be inspected for standards of care on a regular basis;

(3) if he is satisfied that proper procedures exist to ensure that local social service departments and district health authorities in Wales co-operate so that social services follow up any complaints made by health authorities concerning children at risk in private residential homes for mentally handicapped children.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Private residential establishments providing for four or more mentally handicapped children are subject to the registration and inspection arrangements arising from the Registered Homes Act 1984. Such establishments have to be registered with the appropriate county council's social services department and must be inspected by it at least once a year. The primary responsibility for children in care rests with the placing authority. Liaison arrangements between social services authorities and others will vary according to individual circumstances.

Housing Defects Act

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase the present expenditure limit of £14,000 under the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Not at present. But we are monitoring the costs of reinstating dwellings under the Act and would be prepared to prescribe a new limit or limits should it prove necessary.

Library Adviser

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements have been made to provide professional advice to the Welsh Office on library and information matters in order to assist him to discharge his obligations under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 following the termination of advisory services from the Office of Arts and Libraries.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department's senior librarian will provide this professional support from 1 April 1986. The arrangements will be reviewed after a year.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

English Wine

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much English wine was purchased during the last year by his Department for use in the United Kingdom and by British embassies abroad.

Mr. Eggar: Thirty dozen bottles of English wine were purchased by the Government hospitality fund in February last year and a further 30 dozen in November this year. These wines are served at official functions hosted by Her Majesty's Ministers.

Diplomatic missions overseas do not maintain official wine cellars. Wines are selected and stocked by individual officers. We do not have records of what wines are stocked.

Athens Airport

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make further representations to the Greek Government regarding the security aspects at Athens airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have been in touch with the Greek authorities on a regular basis over security at Athens airport and earlier this year offered them assistance in improving security. We will continue to keep in close touch, but note that a number of inspections in recent weeks have confirmed that security measures at the airport conform to the internationally recognised standards set down in annex 17 of the Chicago convention.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Ethiopian Tinned Meat

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek to suspend the import of Ethiopian tinned meat into the United Kingdom and other European Community countries until such time as the Ethiopian Government can show that no grain fit for human consumption is being used to fatten cattle for export from that country.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *364*]: No. The only justification for banning imports of tinned meat from a country is that they would constitute a risk to public health or animal health. Imports from Ethiopia are currently prevented on these grounds.

The checks to ensure that grain given as food aid reaches the people it is intended for are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action his Department has taken over the past year to seek to ensure that local authorities are fulfilling their duties under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1978.

Mr. Needham: I am content that local bodies which have functions under the Act are aware of their responsibilities and of the need to take them into account in formulating priorities.

Air Rifle Clubs

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list all registered air rifle clubs in Northern Ireland, detailing when they received their certificates of authorisation, the location of their approved ranges or proposed ranges and the number of club members;

(2) if he will list all those registered air rifle clubs which submitted their rifles for safe keeping to the Royal Ulster Constabulary at any stage in the past 17 years, indicating *(a)* whether the rifles were submitted voluntarily, *(b)* when they were submitted, *(c)* when they were returned, *(d)* whether licence fees were paid in respect of the rifles while in Royal Ulster Constabularly keeping and *(e)* when those rifles not yet returned will be returned;

(3) if he will list those air rifle clubs, or proposed clubs, which have had applications for certificates of authorisation refused at any stage in the past 16 years, indicating whether and when such refusals were ever revoked.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Industry

13. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on Government policy on manufacturing industry in the light of the findings of the House of Lords Select Committee on Overseas Trade.

Mr. Channon: The Government's policy is to create a climate in which the wealth-creating sector of the economy, including manufacturing industry, can flourish.

21. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the level of investment in manufacturing industry has varied since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: In 1984, capital investment in manufacturing was nearly £6·4 billion at 1980 prices; 16 per cent. above the trough in the last investment cycle downswing which started in 1980. The latest available estimates for all the years since 1979 will be published in the *Official Report*.

*Capital Investment in United Kingdom Manufacturing Industry**
£ million at 1980 prices

Year	
1979	8,230
1980	7,314
1981	5,698
1982	5,516
1983	5,557
1984	6,372

* Divisions 2-4 of the Standard Industrial Classification (Revised 1980), including assets leased to manufacturers from the financial industries.

32. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the figures for manufacturing output and investment in 1984; and how this compares with the year before.

Mr. Pattie: In 1984 the index of manufacturing output rose by nearly 4 per cent. to 100·6 (1980=100)—the largest percentage increase in any year since 1973—and manufacturing investment (including assets leased from financial institutions) increased by nearly 15 per cent. to £6·4 billion (in 1980 prices).

36. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent figure for output in manufacturing industry; and how this compares with the figure for the same month six years ago.

Mr. Pattie: For the third quarter of 1985 the index of production for manufacturing industry is 103, based on 1980 equal to 100. This is 5 per cent. lower than the corresponding index for the third quarter of 1979.

54. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about unfair competition to British manufacturing companies from companies receiving special assistance.

Mr. Pattie: The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Consumer Guarantees

19. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations have been made to his Department about the Office of Fair Trading discussion paper on consumer guarantees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: No representations have been made to my Department about the Office of Fair Trading discussion paper on this subject. I understand that the Director General of Fair Trading has had a number of such representations and that he proposes to publish his final report on consumer guarantees early in the new year.

Legal Advice Centres

20. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his Department's future plans for the funding of legal advice centres within the framework of citizens advice bureaux.

Mr. Howard: My Department has no plans for such funding.

Iraq

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on trading prospects with Iraq.

Mr. Channon: In the first nine months of this year United Kingdom exports to Iraq totalled £340 million, an increase of 44 per cent. over the same period in 1984. I shall be seeking ways of strengthening bilateral trade in meetings this week with the Iraqi Minister of Trade.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what changes have been made in the aid and trade provision and administration.

Mr. Channon: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. and learned Friend's statement on 12 November in which he told the House that the Government were introducing a soft loan facility to enable the doubling by 1988-89 of the annual business that might be won through support under the aid and trade provision.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what account he will take of United States protectionism in establishing Her Majesty's Government's position towards the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon: Our policy will have to evolve to take account of the positions of the United States and other major participants as well as of our interest in reducing protectionist pressures in such countries.

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has now received the European Commission's proposals for a draft negotiating mandate for the multi-fibre arrangement renewal negotiations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The Commission has not yet made a communication to the Council on a draft negotiating mandate for the multi-fibre arrangement negotiations, but is expecting to do so soon.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what study he has made of tariff and non-tariff barriers to United Kingdom and European Community exports of textiles and clothing; and if he will seek to reduce these barriers during the negotiations for renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon: In the forthcoming MFA negotiations and the proposed new GATT round we shall be seeking reductions in the considerable barriers which exist in a number of countries to the export of United Kingdom and European Community textiles and clothing.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he has held with the Governments of Spain and Portugal regarding the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon: I have not had recent bilateral exchanges with either Spain or Portugal about the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. Following the signature of their treaty of accession, Spain and Portugal have the right to attend as observers in all European Community meetings, including those discussing textile trade policy. From 1 January they will participate as full members of the European Community.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has regarding the approach of the United States' Administration towards renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations he has held with the textile and clothing industries regarding the policy to be adopted for the multi-fibre arrangement renewal negotiations.

Mr. Channon: We consulted the representatives of the textile and clothing industry, as well as other interested parties, before the Government decided their overall approach to the multi-fibre arrangement which I announced to the House on 9 May. We have had further detailed discussions since then and I intend to keep in close touch with the industry and other interested parties as the negotiations progress.

Industrial Competitiveness

25. **Dr. Mawhinney** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what change has taken place in the relative competitiveness of British industry since 1979; and what assessments he makes of the contribution to this of trade union legislation enacted in this period.

Mr. Pattie: Since 1979 productivity in manufacturing industry has increased by 22 per cent. By promoting responsible industrial relations and making trades unions more accountable to their members, the Government's industrial relations legislation has made a positive contribution to this improvement. Relative unit labour costs have, however, increased by 7 per cent. since 1979 indicating a need for continued wage restraint.

Industrial Investment

26. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the level of industrial investment in those parts of the United Kingdom having assisted area status; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No. The assisted areas need investment if jobs are to be created there. The revised schemes of regional assistance will help to secure that investment and those jobs.

Retail Grocery

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the figures in each of the last 10 years for the percentage share of the retail grocery sector of *(a)* major multiples, *(b)* other multiples, *(c)* independent stores and *(d)* co-operatives.

Mr. Howard: The Business Statistics Office has conducted full retailing inquiries annually from 1976 to 1980, and bi-annually thereafter. Figures for co-operative societies are not readily available before 1980. They are as follows:

Shares of Retail Sales of Groceries and Provisions

Per cent

	*Multiple retailers with 100 or more outlets	*Other multiple retailers	*Single outlet retailers	Co-operative societies
1976	40	30	29	Figures
1977	44	30	25	not
1978	50	28	22	separately
1979	50	28	22	available
(1980)	(50)	(29)	(21)	
1980	44	21	22	14
1982	44	25	19	12

Source: Retailing inquiries, Business Statistics Office.

Note: Market shares do not always sum to 100 as a result of rounding.

* Including co-operative societies from 1976 to (1980), excluding co-operative societies for 1980 and 1982.

Regional Policy

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of the Government's regional policy.

Mr. Butcher: The changes in regional policy were introduced only a year ago and it is still too early to measure the effectiveness of the revised schemes of assistance.

Science and Technology

29. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total expenditure of his Department on science and technology in 1984-85; and how this compares with the figure for 1979-80.

Mr. Butcher: Expenditure on scientific and technological assistance and on support for investment in innovation in 1984-85 was £416 million. This compares with £143 million in 1979-80.

Telecommunication Equipment

30. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what support his Department provides for the export of telecommunications equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: We have lent considerable support to the efforts of UK companies to secure telecommunications equipment export orders. Aid and trade provision and other measures to counter support available to competitor companies abroad have been offered. Such support continues to be available to all UK companies for current and future export campaigns, as does the full backing and encouragement of Ministers and our representatives overseas. We are also giving our full support to international efforts to reduce the barriers to open trade in telecommunications, notably within the EC telecommunications initiative.

New Technology

31. **Mr. Andy Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to encourage the use of new technology in industry.

Mr. Pattie: The Government's policies to create and maintain a business climate that encourages and rewards enterprise will stimulate improvements in industrial research and development and will help to encourage industry to develop and exploit new technology.

In addition, my Department offers a range of assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1982 and the Science and Technology Act 1965 to help suitable projects.

Gartcosh and Ravenscraig

33. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received on the future of the Gartcosh and Ravenscraig steel plants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: A number of representations from organisations and individuals in Scotland have been made to my Department. I have nothing to add to the replies my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) on 23 October.

Greater Manchester

34. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will indicate what initiatives he is taking to secure the future of manufacturing industry in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Butcher: Most of Greater Manchester has assisted area status and therefore benefits from regional assistance. I have no plans to alter these arrangements.

Soviet Union

35. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on trading prospects with the Soviet Union.

42. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on trading prospects with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Channon: During his visit to London in December 1984 Mr. Gorbachev spoke of a potential for an increase in trade turnover between the United Kingdom and the USSR of 40-50 per cent. in the next few years. I agree that the opportunities for United Kingdom firms to win increased business in the USSR are unusually good. I urge more companies to consider this market which, while difficult to enter initially, can be very rewarding. Her Majesty's Government will provide all possible support consistent with our international obligations.

Steel Industry

37. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the present position in regard to the privatisation of the special steels division of the British Steel Corporation.

Mr. Butcher: British Steel Corporation and GKN have submitted the updated proposals to the Government, following the Government's agreement in principle to their proposals for a joint venture in engineering steels. My right hon. and learned Friend intends to make a statement in due course.

48. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he will next meet the chairman of the British Steel corporation to discuss the steel industry in Scotland.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and learned Friend has no specific plans for a meeting at present.

Research and Development

38. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he has to stimulate improvements in industrial research and development.

Mr. Butcher: The Government's policies to create and maintain a business climate that encourages and rewards enterprise will stimulate improvements in industrial research and development and will help to encourage industry to develop and exploit new technology.

In addition, my Department offers a range of assistance under the Industrial Development Act 1982 and the Science and Technology Act 1965 to help suitable projects.

European Community

39. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the total amount of exports of manufactured goods to the European Economic Community over the most recent 12 months for which figures are available; and what was the total of imports of manufactures from the European Economic Community in the same period.

Mr. Butcher: In the 12 months to September 1985, United Kingdom exports of manufactures to the European Community were £20,200 million and imports were £28,100 million (balance of payments basis).

41. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement of progress on reducing the internal barriers to trade within the European Community.

Mr. Channon: Substantial progress in reducing a wide range of internal barriers to Community trade is recorded in the Luxembourg Presidency's report to the Council (document numbers 9171/85 and 9172/85). The Commission's White Paper entitled "Completing the Internal Market", of which the June European Council took favourable note, sets out its objectives for the removal of the remaining barriers. (A copy of these documents is available in the Library of the House.) The European Council agreed on the removal of remaining barriers by 1992 in priority areas including the removal of physical and technical barriers to the movement of goods. The October Internal Market Council endorsed arrangements for establishing a detailed programme for carrying this work forward in the next 15 months.

Allied Breweries (Elders' Bid)

40. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive the report of the Office of Fair Trading on Elders' bid for Allied Breweries.

Mr. Howard: The Director General of Fair Trading will be advising me as soon as practicable.

Gainsborough

43. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been provided to the Gainsborough travel-to-work area under section 7 of the Industry Act 1972 since the passing of that Act.

Mr. Butcher: Offers made between 1 April 1972 and 30 September 1985 total £4·1 million.

Nissan Motor Plant

44. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to visit the Nissan motor plant in the north-east of England; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit the Nissan motor plant in the north-east of England at the present time. I understand that the project is on schedule for production to begin in 1986 as set out in the heads of agreement between Nissan and the Government.

Regional Assistance

45. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many applications his Department has received for regional assistance from companies in the west midlands assisted area.

Mr. Butcher: Since the designation of intermediate area status on 29 November 1984 my Department has received 597 applications for regional selective assistance in the west midlands. By November 1985 a total of £22 million has been offered in grants, and this is associated with some 13,500 jobs either created or safeguarded.

Inward Investment

46. **Mr. Merchant** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to attract inward investment into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: The Invest in Britain Bureau (IBB) within the Department of Trade and Industry is currently engaged in a major promotional campaign — "Britain Means Business"—in which it is collaborating with all the main British public sector inward investment promotional bodies and the private sector. The campaign, which is additional to the IBB's normal activities, aims to draw attention to the undoubted attractions of the United Kingdom for foreign investors, not leaast of which is the more favourable climate for business the Government have created.

International Tin Council

47. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps the Government have taken to resolve the problems of the International Tin Council.

Mr. Channon: The Government have put forward specific proposals to the International Tin Council to deal effectively with the present situation. I raised the issue yesterday at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, and we shall be continuing our efforts, within the Council and through diplomatic channels, to achieve an agreed early resolution.

Share Ownership

49. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what impact his Department's privatisation programme has had on share ownership in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Pattie: The sales of shares in British Telecom, British Aerospace and Jaguar have made a major contribution to widening individual share ownership, which has roughly doubled as a result of this Government's privatisation programme.

Competition Policy

50. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether Her Majesty's Government's competition policy distinguishes between monopolies in the private sector and monopolies in the public sector.

Mr. Howard: The Fair Trading Act 1973 provides for references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of monopolies by both the Secretary of State and by the Director General of Fair Trading (though the latter is excluded from making references in respect of certain goods and services, including some in the public sector). In addition, section 11 of the Competition Act 1980 provides for references by the Secretary of State of public bodies, including nationalised industries. Such references are directed primarily at efficiency, costs and service, but may include the possible abuse of a monopoly position.

In pursuing their programme of returning state-controlled industries to the private sector, the Government's policy is to establish where appropriate special regulatory regimes to prevent monopoly abuse and encourage efficiency.

Car Imports

51. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent representations he has received concerning car imports into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Butcher: Representations particularly concerning car imports by the multinational manufacturers located in the United Kingdom have been made by my Department. Ministers and officials have had meetings with the major multinational manufacturers in the United Kingdom.

57. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will seek a meeting with the multinational motor manufacturers operating in Britain, concerning their large-scale importation of cars into the United Kingdom and the level of British content in the vehicles assembled here.

Mr. Channon: My ministerial colleagues and officials already have regular meetings with senior management of the multinational motor manufacturers operating in the United Kingdom to discuss these matters.

Secondary Schools (Mini-enterprises)

53. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what his Department is doing to encourage the spread of mini-enterprises in secondary schools.

Mr. Butcher: I refer to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) on 11 November 1985 at column 48.

Company Receivership and Liquidations

55. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many United Kingdom companies were taken into receivership or liquidated during 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The number of company liquidations in the United Kingdom in 1984 was 14,327. Compulsory liquidations and creditors' voluntary liquidations are included. Nevertheless, the stock of UK businesses registered for VAT has risen in each of the last five years: in 1984 there were 177 thousand business starts compared with 140 thousand stops for all reasons.

Home Accident Surveillance System

56. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he is satisfied with the effectiveness of the home accident surveillance system; and whether he has any plans to extend it further.

Mr. Howard: The home accident surveillance system has proved its effectiveness by providing the quantifiable information essential to my Department in its role of improving consumer safety. In addition it is used extensively by manufacturers and trade associations, by other Government Departments and by organisations such as the British Standards Institution, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and the Consumers' Association.

Its success has resulted in a European Commission proposal that a similar scheme be adopted throughout the Community. If approved this may result in an extension of the system to include sports, leisure and school accidents.

Insurance

58. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what recent discussions he has had with representatives of the insurance companies and the insurance brokers; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Howard: I have, since taking office, met many people in the insurance industry, and in the course of these meetings have discussed a wide variety of matters.

Tin Industry

59. **Mr. Harris** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the state of the tin industry in Cornwall.

Mr. Channon: I have received a number of representations from Members of Parliament, local authorities, commercial organisations and individuals, all of which are being carefully considered.

Whisky

60. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has made to the Japanese Government about discriminatory trading terms for Scotch whisky in Japan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: Her Majesty's Government, and most recently my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, have firmly expressed our concern about the

difficulties in Japan facing Scotch whisky exporters. The European Commissioners who visited Tokyo last week also took up the issue.

Postal Services

61. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he last met the chairman of the Post Office to discuss the effectiveness of postal services.

Mr. Pattie: I meet the chairman from time to time to discuss matters of current interest and these would normally include the Post Office's plans to improve postal performance. I last met the chairman on 24 October.

Copyright Protection

Mr. Lilley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when Her Majesty's Government intend to make legislative proposals on the matters covered in the 1981 Green Paper, "Reform of the Law Relating to Coyright, Designs and Performers' Protection," Cmnd. 8302.

Mr. Butcher We are currently preparing a White Paper which will set out the Government's proposals to amend the law on copyright, designs and performers' protection. I anticipate publication early in the new year.

BL (Bathgate)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his discussions with British Leyland on the future of the British Leyland factory at Bathgate.

Mr. Butcher: The closure of Bathgate was proposed by the BL board in its 1984 corporate plan which was discussed in detail between the Department of Trade and Industry and BL. Discussions about possible future use of the facility are continuing locally and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is keeping in close touch with BL and has made it clear that he stands ready to help any viable proposition.

Leather Footwear

Mr. Freeman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of leather footwear exports for the last 12 months of available statistics.

Mr. Channon: Leather footwear to the value of £111·6 million was exported in the 12 months to September 1985.

Scales and Weighing Machines

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the planned timetable for implementation of the Eden working party's recommendations on revised pattern approval procedures and self-verification, as outlined to the recent conference of the Federation of Scale and Weighing Machine Manufacturers.

Mr. Michael Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 November 1985, c. *406*]: Action is already being taken on those Eden committee recommendations relating to pattern approval and it is intended to complete implementation of revised procedures by October 1986. The public consultation period on the Eden report will close on 30 November 1985 and the Government hope to announce their timetable for implementation by mid-1986. Any primary legislation will be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Systime plc

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has examined complaints into the alleged detention and threatening of staff at Systime plc during a visit by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in July 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 November 1985]: Officers from the investigation division of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise visited the offices of Systime plc in July 1984. The personnel at Systime plc were co-operative and nobody was detained or threatened. At the time, solicitors for those interviewed questioned the content of one of the witnesses statements taken which was amended to their satisfaction. The solicitors and Systime plc were informed in January 1985 that no action would be taken. The Commissioners of Customs and Excise are unaware of any complaint about the conduct of their officers in this matter but will investigate thoroughly any specific allegations.

EMPLOYMENT

Small Businesses

62. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received over the last two years from small companies complaining about the payment time of large companies.

Mr. Trippier: I regularly receive representations from small firms about delays by large firms in payment of bills. These representations point out the adverse effect of delays on small firms' financial position. Consideration is being given to publishing guidance on good practice in payment of bills.

64. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Paymaster General what further measures he intends to introduce to help small businesses.

Mr. Trippier: On Tuesday 12 November my right hon. and noble Friend announced a six-point programme of measures to encourage enterprise and employment. Measures to help small businesses include expansion of the enterprise allowance scheme, increased support for local enterprise agencies in England and an extension of the loan guarantee scheme. Increased finding for the promotion of tourism will also benefit many small businesses. Further measures will be announced as appropriate.

Tourist Industry

63. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to give greater public support to the London tourist industry.

Mr. Trippier: The Government will continue to support the promotion of tourism in London, as elsewhere, through the English Tourist Board and the British Tourist Authority. The English Tourist Board provides an annual

subvention to the non-statutory London Visitor and Convention Bureau and this too will continue. I am pleased by the bureau's efforts to increase its support from the private sector and I hope that the London boroughs will also recognise the importance of tourism to London's economy and the role which the LVCB can play in ensuring that tourism benefits are spread as widely as possible throughout the capital.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if he will give the figures for those employed in the tourist industry for each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: The available information on employment in tourism-related industries is regularly published in *British Business*. Figures for 1981 to 1985 are given in the issues of 5-9 November 1984 and 23-29 August 1985, copies of which are available in the Library.

Job Start Scheme

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what is the Government's estimate of the impact that the job start scheme will have on wage levels.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General what is the Government's estimate of the impact that the job start scheme will have on the numbers of long-term unemployed and on wage levels.

Mr. Alan Clark: The job start scheme will be piloted in a number of different areas from January next year with a view to assessing its effectiveness. Its purpose is to help the long-term unemployed to get back into work. Any indirect effects it may have, for example on wage levels, or numbers of long-term unemployed people, can only be a matter for speculation at this stage.

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General whether the proposed £20 allowance under the job start scheme will alter in any respect the legal obligations of employers to observe wages council terms and conditions.

Mr. Alan Clark: No.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Butler asked the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to announce rates of allowance and other details of the job release scheme beyond March 1986; and if the scheme will continue to apply to 64-year-old able-bodied men.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 18 November at column 38. An announcement on the rates of allowance will be made in due course.

Health and Safety

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many persons have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* seriously injured as a result of an accident at work in 1983 and 1984 and the latest available date in 1985.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The table gives the number of deaths and major injuries to employees and self-employed people arising out of or in connection with work and reported to authorities responsible for enforcing the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1984. Figures for 1984 are provisional. No figures are yet available for 1985.

Year	Employees		Self-employed	
	Deaths	Major injuries*	Deaths	Major injuries*
1983	443	12,447	64	114
1984	432	12,246	61	145

* Major injuries are as defined in the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many employees are covered by the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The latest estimate is 20,826,000 as at 30 June 1985.

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many health and safety inspectors there are per 10,000 people covered by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is approximately one inspector for every 10,000 people employed in premises subject to inspection by the Health and Safety Executive. Comparable information about inspectors employed by local authorities to enforce the Act is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Canavan asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of registered unemployed people in the United Kingdom; and what is his estimate of the number of unemployed people who are not registered.

Mr. Alan Clark: In October 1985 there was a total of 3,277,000 unemployed claiming benefits in the United Kingdom. According to the labour force survey, in the spring of 1984 there were about 870,000 people in Great Britain and some 900,000 in the United Kingdom who were seeking work but not claiming benefit.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of persons made redundant who are included in the unemployment count for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and at the latest available date for which figures are available; and if he will also show this figure as a percentage of the total unemployed for each year.

Mr. Alan Clark: The information is not available in the precise form requested. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 28 October at columns *330-31*.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General if he will list the numbers of disabled included in the unemployment count for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and if he will also show this as a percentage of total unemployment in each year.

Mr. Alan Clark: Following is the available information on disabled persons registered as unemployed in September each year from 1979 to 1982.

September	Disabled persons included in unemployment count Thousands	Percentage of total
1979	119·0	9·0
1980	143·1	7·3
1981	177·9	6·2
1982	188·4	5·9

Comparable figures are not available for later years following the removal in October 1982 of the compulsory requirement to register for employment as a condition for receipt of benefits. Figures for those with health problems or disabilities are now available from the labour force survey, as given in my reply to my hon. Friend on 28 October 1985 at column *332*.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will state the number of people with low-paid part-time jobs who are claiming benefit;

(2) if he will estimate what percentage of those registered as unemployed also have low-paid part-time jobs.

Mr. Alan Clark: The labour force survey showed an estimated 105,000 or about 3½ per cent. of those claiming unemployment benefits had part-time paid jobs in the spring of 1984. No figures are available on the levels of pay received.

Disabled Persons

Sir David Price asked the Paymaster General what is his latest estimate of the number of registered disabled persons in Hampshire; how many of them are in employment; how many are unemployed; of those in employment how many are in open employment; and how many are in sheltered employment.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At 5 April 1985, the latest date available, there were 9,204 registered disabled people in Hampshire. Information on the total numbers of those who are in employment, or who are unemployed, is not available. There are currently 371 registered disabled people in sheltered employment in Hampshire.

Labour Force Survey

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General (1) when the latest labour force survey was published; and when the next is expected to be published;

(2) if he will make it his policy not to answer parliamentary questions using information collected in the 1984 labour force survey before the survey itself has been published; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when the labour force survey 1984 and the revised labour force survey 1984 will be published.

Mr. Alan Clark: Preliminary results from the 1984 labour force survey were published in the May 1985 issue of *Employment Gazette*. These results were revised when the official estimates of the mid-1984 population became available; and a note in the July 1985 issue of *Employment Gazette* announced that revised results — which differ only slightly from the preliminary results — were available from my Department. An article comparing the survey estimate of people seeking work with the monthly count was published in the October issue of *Employment Gazette* and further articles on selected topics are in preparation. Meanwhile, information from the survey is regularly used to answer parliamentary questions and other requests for data.

The office of population censuses and surveys (OPCS) also publishes selected results from the survey, first in a monitor and later in a report which includes a technical description of the survey. I understand that a monitor presenting 1984 results will appear early next year and OPCS plans to publish a report covering the 1983 and 1984 surveys next June. The OPCS report on the 1981 survey was published in 1982.

Labour force survey data are also frequently used in the Manpower Services Commission's labour market quarterly reports.

Copies of all the publications mentioned above are held in the Library.

It is my policy to provide hon. Members with the most up-to-date information possible in reply to parliamentary questions. Estimates from the labour force survey are therefore used as soon as the survey results have been checked.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General (1) how many women, who are single, widowed or separated, with dependent children under 16 years of age, have had benefit terminated because of refusal to accept employment, for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985 to date.

(2) how many men over 60 years of age claiming unemployment benefit had their benefit terminated because of failure to accept work, for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Alan Clark: Information about the marital status, dependency position, age and sex of people who are disallowed unemployment benefit on various grounds is not separately recorded for statistical purposes.

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General how many students were claiming unemployment benefit at 10 November.

Mr. Alan Clark: These figures are not collected on Sundays. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply of 14 November at column *230* for the latest figures. The next figures, relating to 14 November, will be published on 5 December.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Child Benefit

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many families with incomes of *(a)* less than £10,000 and *(b)* more than £10,000 are currently in receipt of child benefit; and what is the total cost in each case.

Mr. Newton: In 1983, the latest year for which figures are available, it is estimated that 3·2 million families with total gross incomes (including child benefit) of £10,000 a year or more were receiving a total of £1·8 billion in child benefit a year and that 3·8 million families with lower incomes were receiving a total of £2·2 billion in child benefit a year.

National Health Service

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the level of spending which has been devoted by his Department towards hospital works in each of the last five years, the total capital yielded from the sale of health authority land and property and the use which has been made of this capital as a result.

Mr. Whitney: The following table shows capital expenditure by health authorities and capital receipts between 1980-81 and 1984-85. Proceeds from the sale of surplus land and property are retained by health authorities and have contributed to the continuing major programme of investment in the National Health Service estate. Details of individual hospital works are not held centrally.

Year	*Capital expenditure £ million*	*Capital receipts £ million*
1980-81	563·2	15·6
1981-82	671·4	19·2
1982-83	686·4	18·8
1983-84	713·9	28·5
1984-85	795·4	50·6

Note: These figures are derived from the summarised accounts of health authorities.

General Practitioners

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy with regard to allowing general practitioners to advertise their services.

Mr. Hayhoe: This is a matter for the General Medical Council, which is responsible for regulating the professional conduct of doctors.

Smoking

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific research programmes have been carried out by his Department for the preparation of the advertising campaign which he intends to initiate to discourage youngsters from smoking.

Mr. Whitney: The campaign, which will be tested for a year in two television regions, is based on three pieces of research: a survey starting in May 1984 to establish ways of reaching teenagers with anti-smoking messages, a project commencing in February 1985 aimed at investigating the potential of media advertising for this purpose, and qualitative research on the effectiveness of particular creative approaches undertaken in July and August by the advertising agency appointed to run the campaign.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the policy objectives underlying his Department's funding of *(a)* Action on Smoking and Health and *(b)* the Health Education Council.

Mr. Whitney: The Department provides financial assistance to Action on Smoking and Health in support of its efforts to increase public awareness of the dangers of smoking. The Health Education Council, which is largely financed by Government grant, was established to promote and coordinate health education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In pursuit of its objective the council initiates and supports health education campaigns through the National Health Service, the education service, the media and in other ways, produces health education materials, supports professional training programmes and sponsors appropriate research.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what grant is currently paid to Action on Smoking and Health; when he will decide on whether a grant will be paid for the next financial year; and what criteria he will be taking into account.

Mr. Whitney: Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) has been allocated a grant of £150,840 in the current financial year. An application for funding in 1986-87 is expected shortly when consideration will be given to such factors as ASH's effectiveness in providing information to the public about smoking and health and the cost-effectiveness of its operations.

Hip Replacement Operations

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of hip replacement operations which took place under the National Health Service over the past 12 months.

Mr. Whitney: In 1983, the latest year for which information is available centrally, there were an estimated 35,800 hip replacement operations on National Health Service patients in National Health Service hospitals in England.

North-West Thames Regional Health Authority

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the hospitals in the North-West Thames region where the laundry service has been given to outside contractors, the total of investment for the in-house laundry over the last 10 years and his estimate of the sale proceeds of the plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The contract for district laundry services in Hounslow and Spelthorne health authority has been awarded to a private contractor. I regret that the other information requested is not available centrally.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make available a moderate power body-worn hearing aid for use by patients who also have handling difficulties or arthritic fingers.

Mr. Newton: It is intended that the expected replacement for the OL56 moderate power body-worn hearing aid will be suitable for use by elderly patients with poor manual dexterity.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make available within the National Health Service the in-canal aids (ITCS) which are recommended by otologists and audiologists for some patients suffering from a hearing loss.

Mr. Newton: There is no intention at present to add canal aids to the standard National Health Service range of hearing aids but consultants may prescribe commercial aids, including canal aids, when in their opinion this is clinically necessary.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when his Department last placed an order for BE50 hearing aids; what was the total ordered; and when he expects the next delivery to be sent to ear, nose and throat departments of hospitals in England;

(2) if he will make a statement on the shortage in the National Health Service of BE50 hearing aids and the waiting list of patients for whom this aid has been prescribed.

Mr. Newton: The Department no longer collects this information centrally. Responsibility for supplying hearing aids in England and Wales was transferred to the Mersey regional health authority on 1 April 1985. I suggest the hon. Member contacts the chairman of the regional health authority for detailed information.

Ambulance Services

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the recommended number of people per ambulance in the provision of full 24-hour ambulance cover in a community of average density of population which is partially urban and partially rural, and where the road system is average.

Mr. Whitney: Responsibility for the day-to-day management of ambulance services in England rests with health authorities locally. There is no central advice on vehicle manning levels. It is for each ambulance authority to determine the manpower needed to carry out the duties required in any particular 24-hour period. Variations in manning requirements will be affected by a number of factors which can be known and estimated only locally.

Orthotic and Prosthetic Services

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the contractual terms for production of prosthetic and orthotic aids.

Mr. Newton: The Department awards contracts individually to manufacturers for the supply and repair of artificial limbs and certain appliances, and for their fitting in England. These provide for prices to be based on estimated volumes and costs plus a target profit figure, and for profit sharing within specified levels at the end of the contract period in the light of final figures. Contracting for the supply of orthopaedic footwear and surgical appliances is undertaken by the North West Thames regional health authority on behalf of the National Health Service. The conditions of contract are set out in part 3 of the handbook "Provision of Medical and Surgical Appliances", copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what steps he is taking to establish a career and salary structure in prosthetics and orthotics;

(2) what differentials in salary levels exist between National Health Service employees and those seconded to the National Health Service from commerce for duties in prosthetics and orthotics.

Mr. Whitney: There are no prosthetists employed in the National Health Service in England. There is a small number of orthotists employed and they are graded and paid on the same basis as the much larger group of medical physics technicians. No prosthetists or orthotists are seconded to the National Health Service from commercial firms. The position in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Child Abuse

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidelines are being issued to general practitioners to detect signs of physical and sexual abuse in children.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is not issuing guidelines to general practitioners on the detection of physical and sexual abuse in children. Training for general practitioners in the recognition of child abuse is a matter for the profession itself and its corporate bodies.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what training is included in his Department's certificate of qualification in social work courses regarding the detection of non-accidental injuries and the safeguarding of children at risk of such injuries.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985, c. *338*]: The certificate of qualification in social work is awarded by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work which has responsibility for the approval of all courses leading to that qualification. Such courses all include teaching on legislation relating to children and on social work with children and families as well as practical placements. The council is reviewing current teaching and practice experience specifically related to non-accidental injuries and the extent to which it is feasible to provide further teaching and practice of that kind on these courses.

Health Education Council

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met the chairman of the Health Education council; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Whitney: There was a meeting at ministerial level at the council's annual review on 7 March 1985. Subjects discussed included the council's financial allocations and priorities for 1985-86, the cost-effectiveness of its operations, its organisation and management, and links with the National Health Service.

No Smoking Campaign

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will be making a grant available to the national no smoking day campaign 1986.

Mr. Whitney: Financial support will be offered by the Health Education Council.

Benefits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of supplementary benefit claimants working part time under the 30 hours rule.

Mr. Newton: The number of claimants working part-time at December 1983*, the latest date for which information is available, was 126,000.

*Source: 1983 annual statistical inquiry.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the number of registered unemployed people with no entitlement to unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: At November 1984, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 412,000 unemployed claimants in receipt of neither unemployment nor supplementary benefit (including 124,000 claimants whose entitlement had not yet been determined).

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his latest estimates of the average, maximum and minimum times it takes to process a claim for housing benefit, distinguishing between certificated and standard housing benefit.

Mr. Major: I regret that estimates are not available. The responsibility for the administration of the housing benefit scheme rests with individual local authorities. Information about the speed with which claims are processed is not collected centrally.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the unemployed by entitlement to benefit in April 1980, April 1984, and April 1985, distinguishing between those with *(a)* unemployment benefit only, *(b)* unemployment benefit plus supplementary benefit and *(c)* supplementary benefit only.

Mr. Newton: The information available is given in the table. Figures relate to November of each year and are not yet available for 1985.

	November 1980	*November 1984*
Unemployment benefit only	778,600	699,500
Unemployment and supplementary benefit	161,300	196,400
Supplementary benefit only	663,900	1,688,700

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost of social security payments in the United Kingdom per head of the working population for each of the years 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84, and 1984-85; and what is the proportion spent on administrative costs in each case.

Mr. Newton: The cost of social security payments in the United Kingdom per head of the working population (as defined for Table 1.1 of the monthly *Employment Gazette*) was:—

	£
1979-80	750
1980-81	900
1981-82	1,100
1982-83	1,250
1983-84	1,350
1984-85	1,450

Administrative costs amounted to roughly 4½ per cent. of the total in each year.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the amount of housing benefit paid to students in each of the past 10 years; what the projected figure is for the current and coming years; how many students received such payments in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The Green Paper on social security indicates the Goverment's view that it would be right in principle to return to the situation which existed before the introduction of supplementary benefit in 1966, with students being helped through the grant system, by their families, and by their own earnings in vacation. We are continuing to give consideration to how progress in this direction may most appropriately be made.

Spectacles

Mr. Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will take steps to seek to reduce the delay between the prescribing of spectacles for children and their supply.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is aware of occasional delays in the supply of National Health Service frames. This arises from the changes in the scope of the general ophthalmic services introduced on 1 April causing manufacturers to switch much of their manufacturing from National Health Service frames to the production of frames for the expanded private market. The industry is nevertheless co-operating with the Department in maintaining its services for National Health Service patients.

Hearing Therapy

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hearing therapists are currently being trained; how many are in post; and where they are employed.

Mr. Whitney: Although records are not kept centrally, I understand that there are at present over 50 hearing therapists in post in England, spread throughout all 14 National Health Service regions. Eleven students are on the current hearing therapy course.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what have been the major developments in the prevention of deafness in the last year.

Mr. Whitney: Work has proceeded on a number of important initiatives. The National Rubella Council's campaign to improve immunisation rates in schoolgirls and adult women of childbearing age has continued during the year, with Government support. There have been further discussions about the proposed European Commission directive on the protection of workers from noise. The Health and Safety Commission's efforts to raise the awareness of people in industry to the dangers of exposure to excessive noise at work and the Health and Safety Executive's activity in enforcing relevant legal provision have continued during the last year.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what problems have arisen in relation to assessment, administration or any other aspect of the introduction of the severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Newton: The introduction of any new benefit can present some initial difficulties while staff get used to the rules and procedures. For severe disablement allowance these difficulties were exacerbated by the disruption of the work of local offices arising from the protracted dispute at our Newcastle central office; and by medical boarding arrangements which led to unexpected delays in the

settlement of certain claims. Mistakes have also been made in recording the numbers of claims. Steps have been taken to remedy these problems, and we are doing our best to ensure that claimants have their claims decided with the minimum of delay. I am keeping a close watch on the situation.

NHS (Unfilled Posts)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* physiotherapy, *(b)* occupational therapy and *(c)* clinical psychology posts are unfilled in (i) local and (ii) health authorities; what the cause is; and what short-term and long-term measures are being taken to remedy the shortage.

Mr. Whitney: Information on vacancies in local authorities is not collected centrally.

The results of a sample survey by health authorities last year suggested that nationally 4 per cent. of funded posts in physiotherapy and 15 per cent. in occupational therapy were unfilled after three months. Although we do not collect information centrally about vacancies, we have no indications of any general difficulty in recruiting clinical psychologists. Occasional problems in filling posts in some parts of the country and particular areas of service do however occur.

The shortfall in physiotherapy largely reflects the time normally taken to fill vacancies. The shortfall in occupational therapists is primarily due to an overall shortage of appropriately qualified staff, but other factors, such as geographical location, management arrangements and patterns of specialty also contribute to the problem.

In the short term we are considering with National Health Service management various ways of improving the supply of qualified occupational therapists and actively exploring longer term means of increasing numbers of students in training.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action his Department has taken over the last year to seek to ensure that local authorities are fulfilling their duties under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Mr. Newton: Prime responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the Act rests with local authorities themselves. We continue, however, to collect information about the manner in which the Act is operating in the ways indicated to the right hon. Member in my reply to him on 16 April at columns *122-23*. In addition, if prima facie evidence is provided that a local authority is in breach of its statutory duty, further inquiries are made into the matter. Such inquiries have been made in two cases over the past year.

Bladder and Bowel Disfunction

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the correspondence and documentation sent to him by the hon. Member for Eccles and received from the Wales Council for the Disabled about suppositories and bedtime urine drainage bags; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received about the difficulties suffered by patients with bladder and bowel disfunction following the removal of certain medication from the prescribing list; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received from patients with bladder or bowel disfunctions about the change of prescribing policy for bedtime urine drainage bags; if he will review the situation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have received a number of letters from, and on behalf of, patients with bladder or bowel disfunctions. These letters include correspondence provided by the hon. Member for Eccles from the Wales Council for the Disabled to which we will reply shortly. Because the reflux of urine from a drainage bag is a possible source of infection, it was decided that those night drainage bags which did not have a non-return valve should be excluded from the list of prescribable appliances from 1 July 1985. However, because some patients experienced difficulty with the alternative products, these bags will be made available on prescription again with effect from 1 December 1985.

Pharmacies (New Contract)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many closures he estimates would result from the implementation of the new contract negotiated with pharmacists;

(2) what future discussions are planned with the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee on the implementation of the new contract;

(3) if he will, in this Session of Parliament, introduce legislation to implement the new contract negotiated with the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what annual savings he anticipates would flow from the implementation of the new contract negotiated with the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is anticipated that there will be savings of £4 million per annum once the pharmacists' new contract is implemented. Any savings would by agreement be shared equally between the Government and the profession.

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pharmacies are at present applicants for a National Health Service contract; and what the figure was for each of the last six months.

Mr. Hayhoe: Under existing arrangements, pharmacists wishing to be included in the pharmaceutical list apply for inclusion through the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, and I regret that the information requested is not available centrally.

Invalid Care Allowance (Married Women)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his latest estimate of the annual cost of extending the invalid care allowance to married women; and what reasons other than that of cost he has for not so doing.

Mr. Newton: An additional £85 million a year net of savings on other benefits. Even if such a sum were to be

available, an extension of invalid care allowance to married women could be seen only as one of a number of competing priorities for what is available for social security spending as a whole. Consideration would also have to be given to other ways in which such resources could be used to support carers—for example, through the provision of social services or respite care.

Spina Bifida

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the list of drugs currently available on prescription includes any drugs which can affect the development of spina bifida in children.

Mr. Hayhoe: No product licence has been granted for any medicinal product which includes amongst its indications protection from spina bifida or neural tube defect. As a matter of caution, a considerable number of drugs available on National Health Service prescription are not recommended for use in pregnancy.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will add Pregnavite Forte to those drugs available on prescriptions;

(2) what alternative or equivalent medicine there is on the restricted list to Pregnavite Forte.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) on 25 November.

Dental Treatment

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many patients receiving dental treatment under the National Health Service were required to pay the full cost of the treatment in the latest year for which figures are available; and what this figure is as a percentage of the total number of courses of dental treatment provided in that year;

(2) how many courses of dental treatment required some financial contribution from patients under the National Health Service in the latest year for which figures are available; and what this figure is as a percentage of the total number of courses of dental treatment provided in that year;

(3) how many courses of dental treatment were provided free of charge to patients under the National Health Service in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: A financial contribution was made by patients in 11,628,870 (38 per cent.) of the 30,970,830 courses of dental treatment provided in 1984. The remaining 19,341,960 courses of treatment were provided free of charge. Of those courses where a financial contribution was made it is estimated that in some 5·25 million to 5·5 million cases, (17 to 18 per cent. of all courses of treatment) the patients paid the full cost of their chargeable treatment.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the average charge currently paid by patients for dental treatment under the National Health Service, both in actual terms and as a percentage of the average cost of a course of treatment;

(2) if he will state, for those patients who are required to pay a charge for dental treatment under the National Health Service, what average percentage that charge represents of the average actual cost of the treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe: The estimated average charge per paying patient in 1985-86 is about £18. This represents about 60 per cent. of the average cost of the chargeable treatment.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has any plans to alter the charge system for patients who receive dental treatment under the National Health Service;

(2) what recent representations he has received supporting changes in the charge system for dental treatment under the National Health Service;

(3) if he has made any estimate of the percentage level at which a proportional charge system would have to be levied for dental treatment under the National Health Service in order to raise the same level of revenue as is guaranteed by the current system of dental charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have replies as soon as possible.

Gwent County Council

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will grant additional financial support to Gwent county council to meet the cost of proposed changes in *(a)* pension arrangements and facilities and the introduction of family credit and *(b)* the operation of state maternity allowance.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I have been asked to reply.

The Government's proposals for social security have not yet been finalised. Once they have been my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will be consulting the Local Authorities Association on their effect in the usual way.

Mental Patients

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients have been detained under the Mental Health Act 1983; how many complaints were submitted to the Mental Health Act Commission about treatment of mental patients; and what findings arose from those complaints which were subsequently investigated.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply,* 19 November 1985, c. *159-60*]: Between the introduction of the Mental Health Act on 30 September 1983 and the end of that year there were 3,808 compulsory admissions to NHS mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England.

Schoolchildren (Dietary Survey)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the costs of the dieting survey of schoolchildren referred to in his reply of 17 December 1984 to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), *Official Report,* columns *49-50,* as expected to be available in spring 1985.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply,* 22 November 1985, c. *339*]: Analyses of the data collected in the dietary survey of school children are continuing. So far costs in England and Wales amount to £384,000.

Speech Therapy

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will list such information as is available to him as to which institutions in the National Health Service offer courses leading to an honours degree in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy;

(2) if he will list such information as is available to him, by National Health Service institution, as to the numbers of staff engaged in full or part-time teaching on courses leading to an honours degree in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy; and if he will give any information he has as to whether their contracts are with the National Health Service or with some other employer.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985, c. *339*]: There is one National Health Service institution which offers such courses, the National Hospitals' College of Speech Sciences. I understand that there is a total of 21 academic staff employed. I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply to the last part of his question about contracts as soon as possible.

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list such information as is available to him, by institution within the National Health Service, as to the number of students currently sitting examinations for an honours degree in speech science, speech pathology or speech therapy.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985, c. *339*]: I regret that this information is not available.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 November 1985

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Fraud Squad (Solicitors)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General how many additional solicitors have been recruited for work with the fraud squad over the past year; and what is the number of solicitors so employed.

The Solicitor-General: The fraud investigation group was set up by the Director of Public Prosecutions, after consultation with the Attorney-General, in January 1985. Eleven lawyers were allocated to the group, including a principal assistant director (grade 3) and two assistant directors (grade 5). In October 1984 a third general fraud division was added to the two fraud divisions which then existed. This division is headed by an assistant director (Grade 5), and four lawyers have been assigned to the division. All these staff have been allocated from within the existing complement of staff at the Director of Public Prosecutions' department.

Magistrates

Mr. Wigley asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to the answer of 15 November, *Official Report*, column *294*, if he will indicate how many of the 1,585 magistrates in Wales who acknowledge a political viewpoint identify themselves with each of the political parties, respectively.

The Solicitor-General: The breakdown of political views is given in the table with the caveat that views are indicated prior to appointment and may have since changed and that appointments were at dates widely ranging from the present.

	Con	*Lab*	*Lib/SDP*	*PC*
South Glamorgan				
Vale of Glamorgan	40	22	5	—
Cardiff	72	64	23	3
Mid Glamorgan				
Cynon Valley	6	10	2	1
Lower Rhymney Valley	14	16	3	2
Merthyr Tydfil	12	22	4	—
Miskin	15	23	15	3
Newcastle and Ogmore	33	31	10	1
Upper Rhymney Valley	2	7	—	—
Gwynedd				
Bangor	2	4	1	2
Caernarfon	4	6	3	7
Conwy/Llandudno	10	2	3	2
Eifionydd	1	2	1	—
Nant Conwy	1	2	3	1
Pwllheli	0	3	2	0
North Anglesey	5	9	—	1
South Anglesey	4	2	3	1
Arfudwy-is-Artro	1	1	—	—
Arfudwy-Uch-Artro	1	3	—	1
Estaminer	3	1	1	—
Penllyn	1	—	2	2
Talybont	—	—	—	—
Gwent				
Abergavenny	9	7	1	—
Bedwellty	9	29	7	—
Chepstow	6	6	2	—
Cwmbran	8	7	2	—
Monmouth	4	3	1	—
Newport	68	57	20	1
Pontypool	4	7	3	—
Usk	4	1	—	—
Powys				
Newton	5	4	3	—
Llanidloes	—	1	2	—
Welshpool	7	2	6	—
Machynlleth	2	2	2	1
Rhayader	2	2	2	—
East Radnor	1	—	4	—
Llandrindod Wells	3	1	—	—
Builth	2	2	2	—
Ystradgynlais	4	3	1	—
Talgarth	2	3	2	—
Crickhowel	4	1	1	—
Brecon	5	2	4	—
Dyfed-Ceridigion				
Aberaeron	1	1	2	1
Aberystwyth	2	5	4	3
Cardigan	1	1	3	1
Lampeter	1	1	1	1
Llandysul	2	—	1	—
Tregaron	1	—	3	—
Rhydlewis	—	—	1	—
Dyfed-Carmarthen-Pembroke				
Amman Valley	—	8	2	2
Carmarthen	9	7	2	4
Cemaes	1	—	3	—
Dewsland	2	2	1	—
Fishguard	3	1	1	1
Haverford-West	6	2	3	—
Llandeilo	2	1	—	1
Llandovery	1	3	2	1
Llanelli	12	15	6	1
Milford haven	5	1	1	—
Narberth	2	1	1	—
Newcastle Emlyn	2	1	—	1
Pembroke	6	5	1	—
Pencader	2	1	1	1
St. Clears	4	—	—	1
Tenby	6	3	2	—
Whitland	0	1	1	1
Clwyd				
Berwyn	8	2	3	—
Colwyn	11	5	12	1
Dyffryn Clwyd	10	2	3	—
Flint	5	8	4	1
Hawarden	12	11	4	—
Mold	5	9	6	2
Rhuddlan	19	11	6	1
Wrexham Maelor	26	28	21	3
West Glamorgan				
Afan	14	26	8	—
Lliw Valley	5	10	3	—
Neath	12	20	7	3
Swansea	63	55	15	1

HOME DEPARTMENT

Unlawful Sex (Report)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans any changes in his policy

relating to unlawful sex in the light of the report by the Howard League for Penal Reform on that subject, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Parole

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many reported breaches of parole were received by his Department in 1984; and, of these, how many resulted in recall and how many in warning letters being issued.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not available in the form requested; but in 1984, 512 parole licences were revoked and 302 warning letters were issued after parolees had come to adverse notice.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish for each division in the Metropolitan police comparative numbers of the following ranks in post now and in 1960; deputy commissioner, assistant commissioner, deputy assistant commissioner, commander, chief superintendent, superintendent, chief inspector, inspector, sergeant and constable.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner informs me that divisional figures for 1960 are not available. The breakdown by rank, of the officers in post in the Metropolitan police as a whole on 31 December 1960 and 31 October 1985 is as follows:

31 December 1960		*Equivalent Ranks at 31 October 1985*	
Rank	*Strength*	*Rank*	*Strength*
Assistant Commissioner	5*	Assistant Commissioner	5*
Commander	8	Deputy Assistant Commissioner	17
Deputy Commander	10		
Chief Superintendent	50	Commander	40
Superintendent (I)	175	Chief Superintendent	188
Superintendent (II)	24	Superintendent	237
Chief Inspector	173	Chief Inspector	514
Inspector	652	Inspector	1,381
Sergeant	2,863	Sergeant	4,395
Constable	13,282	Constable	19,955
TOTAL	17,242		26,732

* Includes the Deputy Commissioner who is an Assistant Commissioner appointed Deputy Commissioner by Warrent under section 8 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1856.

Victims Support Schemes

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support Her Majesty's Government have given in 1985 to the National Association of Victims Support Schemes and local victims of violence schemes.

Mr. Mellor: In the current financial year, the Government are making a grant of £120,000 to the National Association of Victims Support Schemes, and in addition providing £6,000 towards the cost of the association's move to new premises. There is no provision for direct grants from the Government to local victims support schemes, but a number are receiving assistance from the Government via the urban programme, the DHSS "Opportunities for Volunteering" scheme and Manpower Services Commission programmes.

Crime Prevention

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what indicators are used by his Department to assess the effectiveness of its crime prevention policies.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office and the police undertake research for this purpose. For example, the results of a property marking demonstration project in South Wales published earlier this year revealed a 40 per cent. reduction in domestic burglaries in the project area during the evaluation period, and an evaluation of a neighbourhood watch scheme in Bristol showed a drop in overall crime of 22 per cent. The effectiveness of crime prevention measures is also assessed in terms of their impact on the fear of crime, and the level of public confidence they generate measured for example by local surveys.

Police Injuries (Cleveland)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Cleveland on how many policeman in Cleveland were injured in the course of their duties in 1985 to date, 1984, 1983 and 1974.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of Cleveland that the number of police officers of his force injured in the course of their duties in the periods requested are as follows:

	Numbers
*1985	468
1984	403
1983	354
1974	181

* To 31 October.

Fingerprinting, Detention and Body Searches

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) for each year since 1979, for each police authority in England and Wales, what is the number of persons fingerprinted against their will;

(2) if he will publish a breakdown for the year 1984 of the numbers of persons in each police force area in England and Wales detained by the police for up to six hours, six to 12 hours, 12 to 18 hours, 18 to 24 hours and longer than 24 hours before being charged with an offence;

(3) if he will call for reports from the relevant chief constables as to how many persons were the subject of intimate body searches by the police in each year since 1979 in each police force area in England and Wales.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not available. For the future, section 50 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 will require chief officers of police to publish in their annual reports information about the number of people kept in police detention for more than 24 hours and subsequently released without charge; the number of applications for warrants of further detention and the results of these applications; and, in relation to each warrant of further detention, the period of further detention authorised under it, the period which the detained person spent in police detention under its authority, and whether he was charged or released without charge. Section 55 of the Act will require chief officers of police to publish in their annual reports information about the total number of intimate searches, the number conducted by a suitably qualified person, the number not so conducted but conducted in the presence of such a person, and the result of these searches. The information will also include, as separate items, the total number of drug offence searches and their results. These provisions will be implemented on 1 January 1986.

Stop and Search

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons in the Metropolitan police area were stopped and searched by the police; how many such stops and searches resulted in *(a)* detection of an alleged offence, *(b)* charging of a person with an offence and *(c)* conviction of a person for an offence; and what were the offences involved in the above cases, for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will call for reports from the appropriate chief constables as to the following information in respect of each police force area in England and Wales other than the Metropolitan police area, namely *(a)* for each area since 1979, the number of persons who were stopped and searched by the police, *(b)* the numbers of such stops and searches, respectively, which resulted in (i) detection of an alleged offence, (ii) charging of a person with an offence and (iii) conviction of a person for an offence, stating the offences involved in the above cases.

Mr. Hurd: I shall write to the right hon. Member.

Miss Sara Keays

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if any complaint has been received from Miss Sara Keays regarding the conduct of the police in connection with their investigations into alleged offences under the Official Secrets Acts.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that no such complaint has been received.

Greater Manchester Fire Authority

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what spending level he has set for the Greater Manchester fire authority for 1986-87; how this compares in real terms with the 1985-86 spending level; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what recent representations he has received from the Greater Manchester fire authority about the spending level he has set for the authority for 1986-87; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will now redetermine the spending level he has set for the Greater Manchester fire authority for 1986-87.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. and learned Friend, the then Home Secretary, announced on 26 July at column *811* a provisional expenditure level of £37·886 million of which £37·803 million was for the fire service. On 30 October the authority submitted an application for redetermination to £41·723 million (£41·640 million for fire). The application estimated that the 1985-86 outturn expenditure on the fire service by the metropolitan county council would be £37·790 million. No application has been made for civil defence.

On 5 November the authority requested a meeting to discuss this application. The authority's application is being carefully considered and my right hon. Friend intends to announce a decision by the time of the 1986-87 RSG settlement in mid-December. A response will soon be made to the authority's request for a meeting.

Fires in the Home (Deaths)

Mr. Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish for each fire authority in England and Wales figures showing the number of deaths in fires in the home for the last three years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Information on deaths in fires in dwellings attended by local authority fire brigades is published annually in "Fire Statistics United Kingdom" (tables 58 and 59 of the issues for 1982 and 1983 respectively). The issue of "Fire Statistics, United Kingdom" for 1984 has not yet been published, but provisional figures are given in the following table:

Fatal casualties in fires in dwellings by brigade area, 1984

	Number
Avon	8
Bedfordshire	2
Berkshire	8
Buckinghamshire	6
Cambridgeshire	5
Cheshire	12
Cleveland	7
Cornwall	—
Cumbria	7
Derbyshire	8
Devon	8
Dorset	4
Durham	7
East Sussex	8
Essex	13
Gloucestershire	1
Hampshire	15
Hereford and Worcester	5
Hertfordshire	5
Humberside	6
Isle of Wight	3

	Number
Kent	14
Lancashire	16
Leicestershire	9
Lincolnshire	3
Norfolk	6
North Yorkshire	4
Northamptonshire	5
Northumberland	2
Nottinghamshire	16
Oxfordshire	1
Shropshire	2
Somerset	2
Staffordshire	3
Suffolk	6
Surrey	7
Warwickshire	3
West Sussex	6
Wiltshire	2
Greater Manchester	47
Merseyside	18
South Yorkshire	16
Tyne and Wear	30
West Midlands	29
West Yorkshire	21
Greater London	101
Clwyd	3
Dyfed	3
Gwent	4
Gwynedd	2
Mid Glamorgan	16
Powys	2
South Glamorgan	3
West Glamorgan	7

Greater Manchester Police

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reply he has sent to the letter to him from the clerk of the Greater Manchester police authority with regard to the financial problems of Greater Manchester police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I assume that the right hon. Member has in mind the letter of 31 October applying on behalf of the Greater Manchester police authority for a redetermination of its expenditure level for 1986-87 which my right hon. Friend set under section 3 of the Rates Act 1984. We are considering this application. My right hon. Friend's decision will be notified to the police authority during December.

Trade Unions (Prison Board Access)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why the Home Office trade unions are not given access to the full prison board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: A meeting with the full prison board would be outside both the formal Whitley machinery and the usual arrangements for the informal conduct of business between the prison department of the Home Office and the Home Office trade unions. The executive members of the prisons board are expected, within their respective areas of responsibility, to consult fully with the trade unions through these channels and to ensure that the board is informed of relevant views.

ENVIRONMENT

Council Housing

Mr. Lightbown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of plans for further encouragement of the sale of public sector flats and wider private sector involvement in the ownership and management of council housing.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. A number of factors have discouraged tenants of flats from buying their homes. In recognition of this, my right hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales propose to increase the discounts available on flats under the right to buy scheme. The new discount scale will run from 42 per cent. to 70 per cent.; the present upper limit is 60 per cent. on flats. No change is proposed in the discount scale for houses, which currently runs from 32 per cent. to 60 per cent.

The general consents will be amended to enable the new discount scale to apply straight away to voluntary sales of flats.

Proposals to give further protection to buyers of flats against unexpectedly high service charges for repairs in the early years of the lease were announced in answer to a Question for the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 22 October, at column 129.

We have also received representations that the requirement to repay discount on resale can cause hardship, and can be an obstacle to people who wish to move to take up employment. We propose to reduce the repayment period, for houses as well as flats, from five to three years. The full discount will be repayable on disposal in the first year after purchase; two thirds in the second year; and one third in the third year.

This change will apply to former tenants who have already bought their homes under the right to buy, and most voluntary sales schemes, except where an owner has become liable to repay discount before the new provisions come into force.

We shall also introduce provisions to enable local authorities to encourage greater tenant participation in management through the delegation of management responsibilities to a wide range of bodies; to safeguard tenants' right to buy where the ownership of tenanted estates is transferred from the local authority to (for example) a trust; and to enable housing management start-up, training and education grants to be made to encourage better and more innovative management. We shall be writing to the local authority associations and others on these provisions shortly. We shall also extend the present ground for possession (and the associated arrangements for compensation) where a local authority intends to develop or do works to a dwelling to cases where possession is required for disposal to the private sector, for renovation or redevelopment as part of a scheme approved by the Secretary of State.

We expect to introduce a Bill shortly to give effect to these proposals.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of empty council properties in each of the London boroughs on 31 October.

Sir George Young: Information for 31 October is not available. The figures relating to 1 April 1985 provided by

the authorities, including the Greater London council, in their housing investment programme returns are listed in column A81 of the "HIP1 (1985) all items print" which is available in the Library.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislative proposals to give local authority tenants the right to manage all or part of their estates by tenant management co-operatives.

Mr. John Patten: I have no immediate plans to provide a statutory right for tenant management co-operatives to take on management responsibilities. However, I am giving every encouragement to local authorities to make voluntary arrangements of this kind, and I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown).

Water Authorities

47. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the next public expenditure White Paper, he will indicate specifically the provision made as regards *(a)* changes in expenditure by water authorities and *(b)* income arising from privatisation of their activities.

Mr. John Patten: I expect the next public expenditure White Paper to include information about water authorities' external finance and investment similar to that published this year in part 5 of Cmnd. 9428-II.

The Government have not yet reached decisions on the possibility of privatisation for water authorities. In any case, because estimates for future receipts from special sales of assets are dependent on commercially sensitive assumptions about content, timing and market conditions, no attempt is made to break down current and future year figures.

Housing (Welwyn Hatfield)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why no information of the housing needs appraisal; dwelling stock position at 1 April is available for Welwyn Hatfield district council; if he will now take steps to secure this information; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme submission by Welwyn Hatfield district council, of which this information forms part, was placed in the Library in early August.

Grant-related Expenditure

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities in response to his announcement in October of provisional grant-related expenditures for 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: Up to 27 November, I had received representations from 23 local authorities about provisional GREs for 1986-87.

Wirral (Labour Statistics)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed by Wirral metropolitan council in 1979 and at the latest available date in total and *(a)* according to the numbers of part-time and full-time staff employed in both years and *(b)* as full-time equivalents for both years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The available information is as follows:

Wirral Metropolitan District Council

	June 1979	*June 1985*
Full-time staff	10,014	7,986
Part-time staff	5,304	6,322
Total staff	15,318	14,308

Information on full-time equivalents for individual authorities is not available centrally.

Homelessness (London)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of homeless families in each of the London boroughs on 31 October.

Sir George Young: The latest available information on homelessness refers to the second quarter of 1985 and is published for each local authority as table 9(b) in "Local Housing Statistics No. 75" (November 1985), a copy of which is available in the Library.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects to publish the report of the review team considering the future of the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: It would not be appropriate to publish the complete report, because it contains commercial information given to the review team in confidence. My right hon. Friend hopes soon to provide the departmental trade union side with details of the team's findings and recommendations to enable it to let him have its considered views.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Guy Barnett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will seek powers to allow him to insist on a public inquiry about a proposal for development in an enterprise zone; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No.

House Purchase (Searches)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation imposing a set time scale for local authorities to provide the results of searches in respect of house purchase.

Mr. John Patten: Local authority responses to local searches and inquiries were considered in both the second report of the Conveyancing Committee and the report of the interdepartmental group on simplifying house buying, copies of which are in the Library. Both reports recognised the importance of speeding up responses and made recommendations.

In October this year the Government appointed a Standing Committee on Conveyancing to promote changes in practice and procedure in the light of the recommendations of the second report. The Committee's

first objective will be to bring about improvements within two years which will be apparent to ordinary housebuyers and sellers.

Leasehold Property

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to allow leaseholders of flats *(a)* to buy the freehold collectively, *(b)* to hire and dismiss managing agents, *(c)* to have the right to have the freeholders accounts examined by an auditor of their choice and *(d)* the same right to extend the lease as applies to houses.

Mr. John Patten: These are all matters which we will take into account in considering the report of the committee chaired by Mr. E. G. Nugee QC on the management of privately owned blocks of flats, which was published on 14 November.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation to extend the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 to include flats and maisonettes.

Mr. John Patten: Before this could be considered it will be necessary to resolve the technical difficulties over the enforcement against successive owners of freehold flats of positive covenants dealing with the repair and maintenance of common parts and the provision of common services. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor is considering Law Commission report No. 127, which proposes a way of dealing with these difficulties, and he intends to give the public an opportunity to comment on the Government's provisional conclusions before any major reform of the law relating to positive and negative covenants is proposed.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each year since the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 came into operation the numbers who *(a)* have purchased freeholds and *(b)* have extended their leases under that Act; and if he will give a regional breakdown of the figures.

Mr. John Patten: The Government have never collected information about individual transactions between freeholders and leaseholders under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

Housing Committees (Tenants Representation)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward legislation giving a right to representation by tenants on local authority housing committees.

Mr. John Patten: I have no present plans to do so. The system of co-option of non-elected members is, however, being considered in the wider context of the Widdecombe committee of inquiry into the conduct of local authority business.

Home Purchase Costs (Government Contributions)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list Government contributions since 1979 towards reducing the costs of buying and selling homes.

Mr. John Patten: In 1980 and 1982 the stamp duty thresholds were raised by £5,000 on each occasion. In 1984 the thresholds were again raised and the main rate of duty reduced to 1 per cent.

The relaxaton of restrictions on solicitors' advertising has already resulted in significant reductions in conveyancing costs. The Government have added further competitive impetus through legislation which allows qualified non-solicitors to carry out conveyancing for reward. In addition, we intend to bring forward legislation to allow building societies to expand their activities in the house transfer market. The increased competition will benefit house buyers and sellers directly.

The Government's commitment to making house buying and selling cheaper and simpler is reflected in the establishment of a Standing Committee on Conveyancing in October of this year. The committee's first objective will be to bring about improvements within two years which will be apparent to ordinary housebuyers and sellers.

Noise Insulation

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to introduce minimum noise insulation standards for housing construction.

Mr. John Patten: The building regulations at present require that the walls and floors between new dwellings should have a reasonable resistance to sound.

Housing Standards

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to introduce minimum space and layout standards for housing construction.

Mr. John Patten: This is not a matter which is appropriate for regulations.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage decrease in housing expenditure between 1980 and 1985.

Sir George Young: Figures for housing expenditure in 1985 are not yet available. But between 1980 and 1984 total public and private expenditure on housing increased by 41 per cent. in cash terms and 7 per cent. in terms of constant value of money.

Truscon Houses (Liverpool)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the Building Research Station into Truscon RD27 houses in Storrington avenue, Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I expect to receive the Building Research Establishment's findings on Truscon RD27 houses in Liverpool shortly. I shall inform the hon. Member of its conclusions.

Coalfields Community Campaign

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will arrange for an exhibition relating to the coalfields community campaign to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I understand that arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 9 December to Friday 13 December.

PRIME MINISTER

Rail Travel

Q8. **Dr. Marek** asked the Prime Minister if she has travelled by rail in the course of her official duties during the past year.

The Prime Minister: No.

MSC (Education and Training)

Q35. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Prime Minister if she is satisfied with the role of the Manpower Services Commission in the effort to raise standards in education and training.

The Prime Minister: Yes; there is much more to be done but I am satisfied that the Manpower Services Commission, in liaison with the education service where appropriate, is making an important contribution to the raising of standards in education and training.

News Blackout (Criteria)

Q61. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what are the arrangements for Her Majesty's Government to request a news blackout on a particular event, and what are the criteria for determining whether such a request is activated.

The Prime Minister: There are no such arrangements.

Southall

Q104. **Mr. Bidwell** asked the Prime Minister if she will make an official visit to Southall.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Colvin asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 28 November.

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Wallace asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Penhaligon asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

Mr. Alton asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 28 November.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meetings of the Cabinet and had meetins with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Public Money (Allocation)

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister what is the total overall identifiable allocation of public money made by the Government since 1979 to *(a)* Edinburgh, *(b)* Bristol, *(c)* Lambeth, *(d)* Newcastle, *(e)* Hammersmith, *(f)* Cardiff, *(g)* Haringey, *(h)* Southampton, *(i)* Leicester, *(j)* Leeds, *(k)* Wandsworth, *(l)* Belfast and *(m)* Northampton (i) in total, (ii) per person, (iii) per unemployed person, (iv) per unemployed person aged under 21 years and (v) per retirement pensioner, in each named district.

The Prime Minister: I shall reply to my hon. Friend shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Regional Policy

44. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will introduce measures to help the economy of the north of England.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government's economic policies are creating conditions for a sustainable growth in jobs and output in the whole country. In addition, improved measures of regional assistance were announced a year ago today and these apply widely throughout the north of England. I have no plans to amend these policies.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Hawksley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many firms have applied for regional selective assistance in the west midlands since it became available there; how many applications have been approved; how these applications are divided between firms employing *(a)* one to 10 persons, *(b)* 11 to 20 persons or *(c)* 21 to 50 persons; how much money has been approved in each category; and what figure was the smallest amount approved in each category to an individual firm.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There have been 607 applications. So far 188 formal offers of grant have been made to a total value of £22·6 million and this is associated with some 13,800 jobs either created or safeguarded. I regret that a breakdown of grant offers by company employee sizeband is not yet available, but grants have ranged from £3,000 towards projects from the smaller companies to well over £1 million in the larger cases.

Overseas Mail

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has made any assessment of the effect upon British exports of proposed increases in tariffs for overseas mail; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: No. Overseas postal tariffs are the responsibility of the Post Office and my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, has no power to intervene. However, we expect that the adverse impact of tariff changes on some mail users will be offset by the effect on others of reducing cross-subsidies within overseas postal services.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, he will raise the subject of increases in the prices of overseas mail.

Mr. Pattie: No.

Universal Postal Union Congress

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and industry who will represent the United Kingdom at the next Universal Postal Union Congress.

Mr. Pattie: It is customary for a joint delegation comprising officials from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Post Office to represent the United Kingdom in this forum.

Post Office

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any representations concerning the implications of the current external financing limit for the capital investment programme of the Post Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assumptions were made when fixing the external financing limit for the Post Office for 1986-87 as to the implications for tariffs within the overall financial framework of the Post Office.

Mr. Pattie: Pricing decisions are a matter for the Post Office Board, but in determining the Post Office's external financing limit for 1986-87 my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, assumed a general level of tariffs consistent with the Government's policy on nationlised industry pricing. Our expectation is that the Post Office will be able to maintain its recent record of reductions, in real terms, in the cost of first and second class postage.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has recently received concerning the implications of Government external financing limits for tariffs charged by the Post Office.

Mr. Pattie: Apart from the views of the Post Office given in discussions with my Department about future financing needs, the Post Office Users' National Council has commented on this question.

Hong Kong Festival

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any record of any business generated by the West Midlands county council's participation in the Birmingham and West Midlands festival held in Hong Kong in October and November 1984.

Mr. Channon: The West Midlands county council participation was not financially supported by the British Overseas Trade Board. We have no record of resulting business.

Electronics Industry (United States Inspectors)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, further to the answer of 11 November, *Official Report*, column *44*, when a decision will be reached in relation to the visits by American inspectors to companies buying American electronics.

Mr. Channon: A decision will be made as soon as possible.

United States Distribution Licence Regulations

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library the terms of the new United States distribution licence regulations.

Mr. Channon: Yes.

Soviet Union

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to promote trade with the Soviet Union.

Mr. Channon: I take every opportunity to encourage United Kingdom firms to seek business in the USSR, which represents a challenging but promising market. The Department of Trade and Industry provides advice and assistance to companies and will be drawing their attention to promising areas highlighted in the five-year plan. Many companies are currently bidding for major projects in the USSR. The overseas project fund is available to support them, while ECGD is currently considering flexible financing packages for these projects. The BOTB offers financial and administrative support for missions and exhibitions. The Department provides a grant-in-aid to the East European Trade Council, the area advisory group which covers the Soviet Union. Attempts are being made to agree an early date for the next session of the Anglo-Soviet joint commission and for the signature of a new programme for economic and industrial co-operation, an important document which highlights sectors and products where we and the Soviet Government have identified the best opportunities for collaboration. I have every hope that Mr. Gorbachev's target of a 40-50 per cent. increase in trade can be achieved over the next few years.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has regarding the approach of the United States' Administration towards renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985]: The United States have stated that they consider

that the MFA should be renewed but as far as I am aware they have not yet determined their detailed policy approach.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

University Students

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his response to the letter which he has received from the chairman of the University Grants Committee about his proposed reduction in the number of places for university students.

Mr. Walden: The letter from the chairman of the University Grants Committee of 11 November, which has been published, conveyed the committee's response to the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" (Cmnd. 9524). It will be taken into account, with other responses to the Green Paper, in the formulation of the promised further statement of policy on higher education which the Government hope to be able to make next year.

Part-time University Students

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what considerations he has given to the possibility of arranging payments of course fees to all part-time university students.

Mr. Walden: Fees are paid to institutions as part of the mandatory award made in respect of full-time university students. To extend mandatory support, even if limited to fees, would result in a substantial increase in public expenditure and cannot be contemplated at the present time.

Student Awards

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make provision for exceptions to present regulations exempting students from having to pay back an overpayment mistakenly made by a local education authority where a student has made a full disclosure of all facts as to his or her financial position to the local education authority.

Mr. Walden: No. It would be inappropriate to allow students to keep public money mistakenly paid to them.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his response to the request which has been submitted to his Department by the National Union of Students for re-establishment of the minimum maintenance award.

Mr. Walden: There is no intention to reintroduce into the awards system a feature which would insulate higher income families from increased parental contributions when higher contributions than before are assessed of parents in the middle income bands.

Open University

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how long people have to wait before being admitted to courses of the Open University.

Mr. Walden: In recent years the majority of applicants have been offered places for the year for which they applied. Those unable to be offered a place for that year were offered a place in the subsequent year if they reapplied.

University Employees (Salaries)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the percentage increase in a university lecturer's salary—maximum—since October 1979, as compared with the rise in the retail price index during the same period.

Sir Keith Joseph: Between October 1979 and April 1984 (the date of the last pay increase) a university lecturer's salary maximum has increased by 50·9 per cent. as compared with a rise in the retail prices index of 48·4 per cent. during the same period.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will set up an independent review body to decide upon university employees' salary scales;

(2) what measures he is prepared to take to increase the salary of a university lecturer to bring it into line with the rise of the cost of living index since October 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: Pay negotiations are in progress between the university employers and the staff side. It is for the employers to consider proposals from the staff side in the first place.

Geophysics

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he now hopes to receive the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils on the Royal Society report on support of geophysics in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the ABRC will be discussing the Royal Society report on the support of geophysics in the United Kingdom in the new year. It is for the board to consider what advice to offer my right hon. Friend in the light of that discussion.

WALES

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will show forecast outcome expenditure for 1985-86 and planned expenditure for 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 on *(a)* trunk roads capital, *(b)* trunk roads current, *(c)* local authority roads capital and *(d)* local authority roads current.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The provisional forecast of net outturn expenditure for 1985-86 is:

	£ million
Central Government—trunk roads:	
Capital	88
Current	13
*Local authority transport and highways:**	
Capital	69
Current	110

* An estimate based on local authority returns which do not separately identify the highways element.

The autumn statement by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer involves consequential changes for the Welsh Office expenditure programme. Decisions will be made on the allocation of provision for roads and other services in my expenditure block within the next few weeks. Details will be announced in the public expenditure White Paper early in the new year.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the revenue expenditure of each district health authority in Wales for each year since reorganisation of the National Health Service.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is given in the following table:

£000

	1974-75	*1975-76*	*1976-77*	*1977-78*	*1978-79*	*1979-80*
Clwyd	17,144	22,620	25,546	28,660	32,460	38,993
Dyfed*	14,037	18,728	21,041	23,878	27,984	34,000
Gwent	22,522	29,463	33,326	37,385	42,554	50,809
Gwynedd	9,976	13,256	15,193	17,026	19,137	23,478
Mid Glamorgan	25,300	33,218	38,069	43,151	49,244	59,618
Powys	4,966	6,550	7,380	8,331	9,661	11,797
South Glamorgan	32,534	41,975	46,999	52,924	59,063	70,655
West Glamorgan	16,786	21,842	25,068	28,408	32,025	38,746

£000

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85†*
Clwyd	52,916	59,244	64,125	66,898	71,638
East Dyfed*	43,425	48,307	39,698	43,003	46,076
Pembrokeshire*	—	—	12,942	13,958	15,163
Gwent	65,980	73,047	79,565	84,567	89,279
Gwynedd	30,445	34,257	37,236	39,666	44,204
Mid Glamorgan	76,760	84,071	90,806	96,980	104,022
Powys	15,062	16,624	18,516	19,754	20,627
South Glamorgan	88,892	98,793	107,438	114,501	119,313
West Glamorgan	50,435	56,665	61,508	65,173	68,667

Source: Annual Accounts of Health Authorities.

* Prior to 1982-83 the Dyfed area health authority covered the whole county.

† The figures for 1984-85 are provisional.

Welsh Language (Farming Consultations)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy, when arranging meetings, lectures or discussions with farmers at Gwynedd, to ensure that such meetings should be conducted in the Welsh language.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My policy is that meetings, lectures or discussions arranged by the Department with farmers or any other group in Gwynedd or in any other part of Wales shall be held in the language most appropriate to the circumstances. Account is taken of the preferences of those attending, and, necessarily, of the competence in Welsh/English of those addressing the meeting.

Milk Production

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what advice his Department is currently giving to Welsh farmers regarding alternatives to milk production in areas most affected by the quota scheme.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Milk producers will adapt their enterprises in the light of changes to their particular circumstances. The Agricultural Development and Advisory Services is available to assist producers in making those decisions and to advise on alternatives to milk production.

Homes Insulation

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he plans any changes in the present criteria for eligibility for the homes insulation scheme.

Mr. Mark Robinson: We have no plans at this time to change the criteria.

Housing Regeneration

Sir Raymond Gower asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the number of major housing estates in Wales in need of regeneration; and what is his policy towards the participation of housing associations and the Land Authority for Wales in such regeneration schemes.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A substantial number of local authority housing estates in Wales would benefit from physical regeneration and better management. We continue to allocate resources to promote physical improvements and we are actively pursuing management initiatives. Our three designated priority estates projects are already showing what can be done through decentralised and accountable management, and feasibility studies have recently taken place on the basis of which we hope to designate three further projects. We propose to bring forward legislation in the current Session to encourage greater tenant participation in management through the delegation of management esponsibilities to a

wide range of bodies. We shall continue to promote the involvement of all with a part to play in improving public sector housing.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Creation

43. **Mr. Knox** asked the Paymaster General whether he intends to introduce any new measure to reduce the level of unemployment.

Mr. Alan Clark: In addition to our £2,000 million programme of employment and training measures giving practical help to unemployed people, my right hon. and Noble Friend recently announced two new pilot schemes specifically to help long-term unemployed people to find work.

Health and Safety

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General how many employers have been prosecuted under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act in the last 12 months.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the year to 30 September 1985 the courts dealt with 1,459 charges laid by Health and Safety Executive inspectors alleging breaches by employers of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act or associated legislation. In some cases more than one information was laid against an employer.

Job Start Scheme

Mr. Prescott asked the Paymaster General (1) whether he will introduce safeguards to the job start scheme to prevent employers from substituting existing jobs with jobs under the new scheme; and whether any safeguards are envisaged to prevent employers replacing expired job start posts with fresh places under the scheme;

(2) what is the proposed method of payment of the allowance under the job start scheme;

(3) what are the pilot scheme regions for the job start scheme;

(4) whether the proposed £20 allowance under the job start scheme will be counted as income for the purposes of calculating (i) tax, (ii) national insurance contributions, (iii) housing benefit and (iv) family income supplement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The pilot areas for the new schemes to help the long-term unemployed will be the following nine areas:

Billingham
Preston
Stoke-on-Trent
Huddersfield
Ealing
Plymouth
Crawley and Horsham
Dundee
Port Talbot and Neath

The pilot schemes will run for six months from January 1986. They will consist of in-depth counselling interviews in jobcentres, a new short course designed specifically to meet the needs of the long-term unemployed and the job start allowance of £20 a week payable for six months to anyone who takes a job with gross earnings of less than £80 a week.

The job start allowance will be paid direct to the employee and will be free of national insurance contributions for both employees and employers. As income arising from employment, it will be taxable, but it will not be taken into account in calculating entitlement to family income supplement and housing benefit. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services will be carrying out the appropriate consultations before laying regulations before the House to exempt the job start allowance from consideration for family income supplement and housing benefit purposes. The job start allowance will provide a financial incentive for the long-term unemployed to take some of the increasing number of unfilled vacancies. There will be no financial advantage to the employer, and hence there is no reason why employers should seek to substitute recruits from the long-term unemployed for their existing employees.

Regional Tourist Boards

Mr. Couchman asked the Paymaster General what efforts he is making to ensure that more responsibility is devolved to the regional tourist boards.

Mr. Trippier: The English Tourist Board has already taken some welcome steps following the Government's 1983 tourism review to devolve activities to the regional tourist boards including by providing some additional funding for regional marketing initiatives and delegating section 4 appraisal work for smaller cases. The regional boards will also be responsible for administering the new voluntary hotel registration scheme. My Department will be discussing with the ETB how the regional boards' role can be further strengthened so that they can contribute more effectively to the development of tourism in England.

Youth Training (Deaf People)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General how many deaf young people have been trained on the youth training scheme in the last two years; and how many of them were able to obtain paid employment after their training.

Mr. Trippier: Information relating specifically to deaf young people is not available.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General what special help has been give to deaf trainees on the youth training scheme to facilitate full participation by them.

Mr. Trippier: The youth training scheme is open equally to all eligible young people including those with disabilities such as deafness. Disabled youngsters are eligible to enter the scheme up to the age of 21. The Manpower Services Commission has introduced a number of measures to enable those who need special help to gain maximum benefit from the scheme and has produced publicity material to encourage them to participate. The new two-year youth training scheme will provide funding for an interpreter service for deaf young people to help them, where this is necessary, participate fully in the scheme.

Disabled People (Employment)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General whether he now has any plans to seek to make the code of practice on the employment of disabled people mandatory.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have no present plans to do so.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General if the Government have any plans to ratify the International Labour Organisation's convention No. 159 concerning vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled people.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister informed the hon. Member on 18 January at column *237*, the decision not to ratify convention No. 159 was announced by my right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State for Employment, by way of a White Paper (Cmnd. No. 9417) which was laid before Parliament on Friday 21 December 1984. In this White Paper the Goverment outlined clear reasons why it was unable to proceed with ratification. The Government's position remains unchanged.

Community Programme (Deaf People)

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Paymaster General what assistance has been provided to enable deaf people to go on the community programme; and how many deaf people have participated in each of the last three years.

Mr. Alan Clark: Separate information on the number of deaf people on the community programme is not held. However, all projects employing and benefiting disabled people, including deaf people, are welcomed and encouraged. Because of the particular difficulties faced by disabled people in finding employment, the period of unemployment required to qualify for the community programme is reduced.

Local Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many local enterprise agencies are established, at the latest date for which figures are available; and what percentage of them receive financial support from local authorities.

Mr. David Trippier: According to my Department's records, there are currently 308 established local enterprise agencies. But no records are maintained on the number supported by local authorities. However the latest directory of enterprise agencies (May 1985) produced by Business in the Community, suggests that at least 169 LEAs are supported (either in cash, or kind, or both) by local authorities. This represents 55 per cent. of the total number of established LEAs as recorded by my Department.

Youth Training (East Midlands)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently on youth training schemes in Leicester and in the east midlands.

Mr. Trippier: At the end of October, the latest date for which statistics are available, there were 2,627 young people in training on the youth training scheme in the Leicester local authority district and 24,376 in training on the scheme in the east midlands.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General how many people have completed youth training schemes in Leicester and the east midlands to date.

Mr. Trippier: Since the start of the youth training scheme, 2,176 young people have completed the scheme in the Leicester local authority district and 26,867 in the east midlands. In addition, 2,665 young people in Leicester, and 32,066 in the east midlands, left before completing their full entitlement to training.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Paymaster General whether he has any information as to the number or percentage of young people who found work following the successful completion of youth training schemes in Leicester and in the east midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular follow-up survey of young people some three months after they leave the youth training scheme. The latest survey results cover young people who left the scheme during April and May 1985. These show that 80 per cent. of those completing their training in the Leicester local authority district, and 71 per cent. in the east midlands, were in employment. Comparable figures for all leavers were 70 per cent. in the Leicester local authority district and 67 per cent. in the east midlands.

Although these figures only cover a two-month period, they are a clear indication of the advantages and benefits to young people of taking part in the youth training scheme.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Winnick asked the Paymaster General if, following the answer on 25 November to the hon. Member for Walsall, North regarding unemployment statistics, he will give so much of the information requested in the original questions as was not included in the reply.

Mr. Alan Clark: The answer of 25 November included all the available information requested in the original questions. Increases in unemployment since 1979 are not available for the black country as defined in the answer, because comparable data are not available, following the introduction of the ward-based system for allocating claimants to locations and the change in boundaries of travel-to-work areas. My Department has recently made available estimates of the number of unemployed in the United Kingdom and in each region, which takes account of all the discontinuities in the collection process since 1971. However, it would not be practical to extend these calculations to smaller areas.

SCOTLAND

Young Persons (Detention)

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many persons under 16 years of age were detained in institutions for over-16s or in police cells in each of the last five years.

Mr. John MacKay: The information in relation to the numbers of under-16s received into penal establishments is as follows:

	Convicted	*Remanded*
1980	6	157
1981	3	134
1982	12	147
1983	9	144
1984	6	137

Similar information in relation to detention in police cells is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prosthetic and Orthotic Aids

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what recommendations of the Denny working party report 1972 on prosthetic and orthotic aids have been implemented; which remain to be implemented; and what progress can be expected towards bringing the recommendations fully into force;

(2) what recommendations of the Denny working party report 1972 on prosthetic and orthotic aids have not been accepted; and why.

Mr. John MacKay: The report "The Future of the Artificial Limb Service in Scotland" (the Denny report) was published in 1970. In the following year, the then Secretary of State for Scotland announced in Parliament his acceptance of the report.

The report contained about 40 recommendations. Many of these related to matters of good practice, which have been recommended to health boards. By and large, the major recommendations have now been implemented. The hon. Member may wish to write to me if he has a particular interest in any specific proposal.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will devolve to local health boards clinical and financial responsibility for prosthesis.

Mr. John MacKay: Health boards already have clinical and general management responsibility for the prosthetic service, and financial responsibility for all related matters except the prostheses themselves.

A92 (Ellon-Bridge of Don)

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many deaths or serious injuries occurred on the A92 Ellon-Bridge of Don road in 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980 and each subsequent year to date.

Mr. Ancram: The number of reported deaths and serious injuries arising from road accidents on the A92 Ellon-Bridge of Don road since 1979 was as follows:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Fatalities	4	2	1	—	7	2
Serious injuries	23	26	15	14	14	24

Because of changes in the extent of information collected and technical difficulties, figures prior to 1978 are not available.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many accidents have been reported on the A92 Ellon-Bridge of Don road for five-year intervals from 1965 to the latest available date.

Mr. Ancram: The number of reported injury road accidents from 1979 was as follows:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Fatal	4	2	1	—	6	2
Serious	15	18	14	11	9	10
Slight	33	34	24	30	21	32
Total	52	54	39	41	36	44

Because of changes in the extent of information collected and technical difficulties, figures prior to 1978 are not available. The figures do not include information on accidents involving vehicle damage only, which is not held centrally.

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many vehicles a year have used the A92 Ellon-Bridge of Don road for five-year intervals from 1965 to the latest available date.

Mr. Ancram: The approximate annual flows of vehicles on the A92 Ellon-Bridge of Don trunk road, based on single counts in specific census years, have been as follows:

Year	*Number of vehicles*
1965	1,441,000
1971	2,014,000
1975	2,549,000
1979	2,933,000
1985	3,508,000

Examinations

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of appeals made to the Scottish Examinations Board against awards made in the 1985 Scottish certificate of education examinations which were submitted because of disruption to teaching prior to 1 April.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of appeals submitted on grounds of disruption to teaching prior to 1 April was 9,758.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the proportion of A passes in the awards made in 1985, 1984, 1983 and 1982 in the Scottish certificate of higher grade examination.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Percentage of band A passes on higher grade* per cent.
1985	11·2
1984†	11·4
1983†	11·5
1982†	11·1

* Post appeal; all subjects; all candidates.
† *Source:* The Scottish Examination Board's reports for 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many appeals were received by the Scottish Examinations Board against the awards in the 1985 Scottish certificate of education examinations; of them how many were successful; and what are the comparable statistics for 1984, 1983, 1982 and 1981.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information requested is as follows:

Year	Total appeals	Number of appeals which resulted in upgrading	Percentage of success rate per cent.
1985	31,570	9,582	30·35
1984*	23,826	9,027	37·89
1983*	22,360	8,349	37·34
1982*	24,208	8,493	35·08
1981*	22,650	7,981	35·27

* *Source:* The Scottish Examination Board's reports for 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

The figures for 1985 are not directly comparable with those for 1981 to 1984 because of the extended arrangements which operated in 1985 to help candidates who had lost teaching time as a result of the teachers' dispute, and because in many cases Ex 4 order of merit forms were not submitted by schools in support of appeals which necessarily gave the board a less secure basis of evidence on which to work. The following analysis of the figures for 1985 is therefore relevant:

	Total	Number of appeals which resulted in upgrading	Percentage of success rate per cent.
Normal appeals	21,812	6,836	31·34
Appeals under extended arrangements	9,758	2,746	28·14
Total	31,570	9,582	30·35
Appeals supported by Ex 4	14,600	5,498	37·66
Appeals in which Ex 4 was lacking	16,970	4,084	24·14
Total	31,570	9,582	30·35

Scottish Examinations Board

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions in the last six years he has made directions to the Scottish Examinations Board under section 129(2) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has not in the last six years made any formal directions to the board using these powers.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the budget of the Scottish Examinations Board devoted to public information; and what publications are presently available outlining the method of working of the board.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The actual expenditure of the board on publications in 1983 and 1984 was £12,143 and £13,058 respectively. The board's approved estimate for 1985 is £23,920 which includes £10,000 for publicity in relation to the new standard grade courses. Publications presently available which outline the board's method of working are listed in appendix B (page 258) of the "Scottish Certificate of Education Examination Conditions and Arrangements 1986", a copy of which I have placed in the Library of the House.

Additionally, the board issue letters, circulars, explanatory material and exemplars as necessary to all education authorities and presenting centres. Copies of these are available to other interested bodies and individuals on application to the board.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will arrange for the Scottish Examinations Board to publish for the public an outline of its procedures in awarding passes in the Scottish certificate of education.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has taken this up with the board.

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter of 15 November 1979 from the Scottish Examinations Board outlining the board's awarding procedures.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. Friend has done so.

Nuclear Reprocessing Plant, Dounreay

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to discuss the proposed reprocessing plant at Dounreay.

Mr. Ancram: Neither my right hon. Friend not I have had any such meeting.

Islands Councils (Inquiry)

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total cost to public funds of the inquiry into the functions and powers of the islands councils, under the chairmanship of Sir David Montgomery.

Mr. Ancram: The travel costs and other expenses of the committee of inquiry amounted to £8,683. It is not possible to identify separately the costs incurred by my Department in supplying general secretarial and support services, or by other public bodies giving evidence.

Cancer

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the incidence of cancer in Scotland.

Mr. Younger: A major document—the "Atlas of Cancer in Scotland 1975-1980"—was published today by the World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer and the Cancer Registries of Scotland. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the

Library. The Atlas is the first in the world showing national incidence of cancer. Twenty common and 19 less common cancers are mapped by local authority district and the rates compared with those of other countries. Scotland has some high rates, particularly of lung cancer, which are cause for concern. Those forms of cancer most prevalent in Scotland seem to be associated with tobacco, spirits and diets with an excess of fat and a deficiency of fresh vegetables and other fibre. Much remains to be known about the causes of cancer, but I am satisfied that measures which are already the subject of Government action in the health education field—on smoking, drinking and diet—would, if heeded by the public, lead to significant reduction in our cancer rates. Government funding of research into the causes, prevention, management and cure of cancer will continue at its present high level, and I would expect the research needs identified in the Atlas to form the basis of new and productive research in the years ahead.

Fire Services (Discipline)

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes to issue guidance to the fire service in Scotland on the procedures to be followed under the Fire Services (Discipline) (Scotland) Regulations 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Younger: I have today placed in the Library a copy of the guidance to be issued to firemasters. This guidance, like the regulations themselves, has been the subject of consultation with fire authorities, representative bodies in the fire service and the national joint councils. It represents the agreed procedure for handling cases under the regulations and is designed to assist fire authorities and members of brigades to achieve uniformity of practice and natural justice in disciplinary matters, consistent with the needs and traditions of the fire services.

DEFENCE

Aeronautical Quality Assurance Directorate

Mr. Shersby asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the hon. Member for Uxbridge concerning alternative uses for the premises occupied by the Aeronautical Quality Assurance Directorate at Harefield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: My hon. Friend has made a number of representations, both in person and in writing, to me on this subject and has asked me to consider the possibility of further use of the site by the Ministry of Defence or other Government agencies, or its early disposal for alternative use. All these possibilities are being considered.

On present plans, there will continue to be a quality assurance presence at Harefield until late 1987, albeit on a smaller scale than before.

NATO (Ammunition)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, before the placing of orders for ammunition from companies in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries, any inquiries are made about the use of military conscripts in factories competing agaist United Kingdom suppliers.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will answer shortly.

NATO (Reserves)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the restructuring of reserves in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Mr. Stanley: Reserve forces committed to NATO by Alliance members are organised on a national basis. As far as the United Kingdom reserve forces are concerned, the Government's policy is to expand both their numbers and their roles as a highly cost-effective contribution to our overall defence capability as detailed in paragraphs 446-51 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985"—Cmnd. 9430-1.

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has as to the percentage of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation forces which are trained reservists.

Mr. Stanley: Figures relating to active duty military manpower, civilian manpower and committed reserves of NATO allies are contained in the United States Defense Secretary's annual report to Congress on "Allied Contributions to the Common Defense". A copy of the 1985 report has been placed in the Library.

Cyprus Secrets Trial

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the seven acquitted defendants in the Cyprus Official Secrets Act trial will receive all pay and allowances due to them for the period between their arrest and their acquittal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 November 1985, c. *354*]: Yes.

Colombia (Rescue Operations)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether there were any delays in RAF flights to Colombia to assist in rescue operations as a result of difficulties in negotiating overflying rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 November 1985, c. *564*]: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave on 25 November to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) at columns *418* and *512*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Intergovernmental Council

Mr. McCusker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings have taken place under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish Ministerial Council during the current year at which matters which are the responsibility of Northern Ireland Government Departments were discussed; what matters were thus discussed; and what conclusions were reached.

Mr. Tom King: Four meetings of Ministers have taken place this year, under the auspices of the Anglo-Irish

Intergovernmental Council, to discuss matters which are the responsibility of Northern Ireland Departments. They are:

15 March 1985: Belfast
Lord Lyell, Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office, and Republic of Ireland Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Deasy).

26 March 1985: Dublin
Mr. Nicholas Scott, Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office, and Republic of Ireland Minister for Education (Mrs. Hussey).

7 August 1985:
Mr. Christopher Patten, Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office, and Republic of Ireland Minister for Health and Social Affairs (Mr. Desmond).

11 September 1985:
Lord Lyell, Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office, and Republic of Ireland Minister for Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. O'Toole).

Matters of mutual concern were discussed at each meeting.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if a decision has been made about the location of the premises in which the proposed Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will meet.

Mr. Tom King: Article 3 of the agreement envisages that the conference will meet in different forms. All meetings will not, therefore, necessarily be held in the same premises.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the proposed Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference will have authority to discuss United Kingdom and Western Alliance defence installations with Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *265*]: No. The agreement does not relate to defence matters.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what will be the postal address of the proposed secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference;

(2) where is the location of the proposed secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *265*]: It is expected that the secretariat will be located in Belfast.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if Her Majesty's Government expect any financial support from the Government of the United States of America to be available for Northern Ireland in the context of the proposed Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *265*]: The Government of the United Kingdom have not received any formal offers of financial support from the Government of the United States of America to be available in Northern Ireland in response to the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement. But the President has said that he will be working closely with Congress in a bipartisan effort to find tangible ways for the United States to lend practical support to this important agreement. I welcome this response, but I cannot anticipate what the outcome will be.

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the respective proportionate contributions towards the costs of operation of the Secretariat of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference by the two Governments involved.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 November 1985, c. *265*]: Both Governments will contribute to the costs of operating the secretariat, if the Anglo-Irish agreement is approved by Parliament. Financial details remain to be finalised.

Public Libraries

Mr. Maginnis asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish figures showing expenditure in real terms on public libraries in Northern Ireland as a whole, and for each education and library board since 1978; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

£ million

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Belfast	5·88	5·45	3·94	3·46	2·96	3·31	3·12
North-Eastern	3·41	3·10	2·56	2·40	2·44	2·37	2·39
South-Eastern	3·33	3·01	2·50	2·28	2·18	2·56	2·45
Southern	3·54	3·40	3·22	2·52	2·44	2·32	2·39
Western	3·35	3·32	2·82	2·35	2·22	2·12	2·22
Total	19·51	18·28	15·04	12·99	12·24	12·68	12·57

Note: These figures include expenditure on the schools library service which cannot be separately identified.

The reductions in library expenditure as expressed in real terms is due in part to declining capital expenditure where boards have in general accorded highest priority to the schools sector. Recurrent expenditure has also declined in real terms and again this reflects each board's local determination of priorities having regard to the total resources available and competing demands from other sectors.

Air Rifle Clubs

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all registered air rifle clubs in Northern Ireland, detailing when they received their certificates of authorisation, the location of their aproved ranges or proposed ranges and the number of club members.

Mr. Scott: [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985]: There are seven authorised air rifle clubs with a total membership of 162. Certificates of authorisation are renewed every three years and all seven air rifle clubs received their original authorisations before 1970. For reasons of security, I do not wish to detail their names and the locations of their ranges.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all those registered air rifle clubs which submitted their rifles for safe keeping to the Royal Ulster Constabulary at any stage in the past 17 years, indicating *(a)* whether the rifles were submitted voluntarily, *(b)* when they were submitted, *(c)* when they were returned, *(d)* whether licence fees were paid in respect of the rifles while in Royal Ulster Constabulary keeping and *(e)* when those rifles not yet returned will be returned.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985]: One authorised air rifle club voluntarily gave its weapons to the Royal Ulster Constabulary for safe keeping on 9 September 1985. Licence fees have not been paid by that club as they are not required by virtue of article 33(2) of the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. The Royal Ulster Constabulary has also been holding, for safe keeing, air weapons which were voluntarily surrendered to it on 12 February 1974 by a club which is no longer authorised under the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. Licence fees have been paid for those weapons. In both cases it is not possible to say when the air weapons will be returned to their owners. For reasons of security, I do not wish to detail the names of the clubs.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those air rifle clubs, or proposed clubs, which have had applications for certificates of authorisation refused at any stage in the past 16 years, indicating whether and when such refusals were ever revoked.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985]: During the past 16 years 23 air rifle clubs have applied for authorisation by the Secretay of State. All have been refused, and no refusals have been revoked. The years of their refusals are:

Year	*Number*
1977	11
1978	1
1979	4
1980	4
1982	1
1983	1
1985	1

For reasons of security, I do not wish to list their names.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Public Expenditure (Benefit Take-up)

45. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what level of take-up of means-tested benefit was used as an assumption in setting the public expenditure totals for future financial years.

Mr. Major: Forecasts of expenditure on means-tested benefits are not based on any explicit assumption that a specified proportion of those entitled to a benefit will actually claim it. Rather, they are based on changing trends in the actual number of beneficiaries, and thus take account of changes in take-up only implicitly.

Benefits (Cost)

46. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total cost to the Exchequer in respect of benefits whose value is linked to the cost of living, of each 1 per cent. increase in the rate of inflation.

Mr. Newton: The cost of each 1 per cent. increase in those benefits which the Government are committed to increase in line with the cost of living would be about £240 million in a full year.

Doctors (Computers)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the issue of computers to doctors by a medicines manufacturer supplying the National Health Service, the name of the company having been sent to him by the hon. Member for Brent, South, is within the code of practice and the voluntary price regulation scheme operated by his Department.

Mr. Whitney: We understand that the company issued some computers on loan to doctors in furtherance of work which they were doing on its behalf. My officials will discuss this matter with the company concerned when next they meet to discuss pharmaceutical prices, costs and profits to confirm that the cost may properly be reflected in the prices of National Health Service medicines. The code of practice is concerned with marketing and is administered by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry.

Orthotic and Prosthetic Aids

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the provision made for research and development of new orthotic and prosthetic aids in the public and private sectors, respectively; what information he has as to the cash outlays made in each category over the last five years; what new aids have emerged on the market as a result; and how the research and development is monitored.

Mr. Newton: Information about the progress in each year of research and development work (R and D) which would benefit the disabled carried out on behalf of any Minister of the Crown is collected by the Department and published in the report to Parliament under section 22 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. These reports include work on the development of new prosthetic and orthotic aids. Details of R and D in the fields commissioned directly by any Department are also published annually in the DHSS handbook of research and development. These commissions, which include the support of research units at bioengineering centre University College London, orthotics research and locomotor assessment unit and Chailey heritage, are let under the auspices of the supply research liaison group. This is a body of senior officials and outside advisers who are responsible for determining the needs and approving the research. Individual projects are monitored by departmental officials.

The cash outlay on R and D into artificial limbs and external orthoses in each of the last five years was:

	£
1980-81	586,000
1981-82	1,068,000
1982-83	1,412,000
1983-84	1,382,000
1984-85	1,333,000

This was almost wholly spent in public sector establishments.

New aids which have resulted from the commissioned research are the swivel walker, hip guidance orthoses, Cherwell orthoses, moulded seating, external fracture fixator, rapid-form socket manufacture for artificial limbs.

In addition, some limb manufacturers undertake research and development which is in part financed by the Department through the contracts let for the supply of artificial limbs. The expenditure borne by the Department for this purpose was in the years concerned:

	£
1980	370,000
1981	585,000
1982	665,000
1983	672,000
1984	1,083,000

Successful development by these manufacturers—not necessarily related to the expenditure in the years listed — are the myoelectric hand, lightweight modular artificial legs, moulded plastics feet and a moulded four bar knee unit.

We have no information about other R and D provision in the private sector.

Widows (Maternity Allowances)

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce legislation to allow women widowed during pregnancy or shortly after childbirth to receive maternity allowances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Mrs. Knight) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 28 October 1985 at column *386*.

Blood and Blood Products

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to what extent the number of blood donors supplying the transfusion service has changed over the last year; and what assessment he makes of the effect on the number of donors of fear of catching, or passing on, acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Hayhoe: Records of the number of donors are not kept centrally, and the frequency of donation varies. The latest figures available from the National Blood Transfusion Service on the number of donations obtained in England and Wales are as follows:

	Number
Quarter ending September 1983	528,972
Quarter ending December 1983	530,165
Quarter ending March 1984	567,796
Quarter ending June 1984	525,934
Quarter ending September 1984	521,307
Quarter ending December 1984	543,589
Quarter ending March 1985	*538,493
Quarter ending June 1985	*525,591

* Provisional.

It is not possible to identify the reasons behind such minor fluctuations as have occurred. We have, however, taken every opportunity to reassure the public that there is no risk of contracting AIDS from giving blood.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many haemophiliacs have *(a)* been identified as carriers of HTLV III virus, *(b)* contracted acquired immune deficiency syndrome and *(c)* died as a result of treatment with contaminated blood products.

Mr. Hayhoe: Of the 2,570 haemophiliac patients so far tested, 906—35 per cent.—have been reported positive for HTLV III antibody. Although the test does not detect the virus itself, it is believed that most antibody-positive patients will be carriers of the virus.

According to reports received by the communicable disease surveillance centre, by the end of October, eight haemophiliac patients had developed AIDS, all of whom had died.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he anticipates that synthetic Factor VIII will be available for clinical use.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is not possible to forecast how long it will take to develop genetically-engineered Factor VIII into a viable commercial product.

AIDS

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, how widely the Health Education Council leaflet promoting awareness of the risks of acquired immune deficiency syndrome has been distributed.

Mr. Hayhoe: 654,000 copies of the leaflet have been distributed through health education units, voluntary sector bodies, employers, health professionals and other organisations. A reprint of 300,000 copies is in progress.

Mr. Kirkwood: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what has been the expenditure of central Government and each regional health authority for each of the years since 1981 on all aspects of treatment and prevention of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Hayhoe: Expenditure on treatment or prevention of acquired immune deficiency syndrome — AIDS — is not separately recorded in health authority accounts and details of spending by individual regional health authorities are not therefore available. In the current financial year, the Government have so far allocated some £2 million towards the cost of treatment and prevention of AIDS. The main expenditure has been on the development and evaluation of screening tests, £880,000, additional allocations to the three Thames regions where most cases are currently occurring, £680,000, and to haemophilia reference centres, £90,000, grants to the Haemophilia Society, £47,000, and the Terrence Higgins Trust, £35,000, and funding for a public health education project £100,000. In addition the Medical Research Council has received a total of £431,000 for research into AIDS.

Benefit Statistics

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what are his latest estimates of the average, maximum and minimum times it takes to process a claim for *(a)* child benefit, *(b)* family income supplement, *(c)* unemployment benefit and *(d)* supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

Benefit	*Processing time (Working days)*		
	Average	*Minimum*	*Maximum*
Child Benefit			
Straightforward claims (computer processed)	5	5	10-14
Non-straightforward claim (manually processed)	21	5-9	n/a
Family income supplement	15	3	n/a
Supplementary benefit	8	n/a	n/a

Comparable figures for unemployment benefit are not available. 35·2 per cent. of unemployment benefit claims result in a payment within six days: 76·2 per cent. result in a payment within 12 days.

Parliamentary Constituencies

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the shire counties, London boroughs and metropolitan boroughs in England in ranking order according to the degree by which their electorates vary from the nationally averaged electorate appropriate to the number of parliamentary constituencies within them.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the following table:

Area	*1985 electorate*	*Average electorate per constituency*	
		Number	*Percentage difference from national average*
England	35,938,491	68,716	
Isle of Wight	97,614	97,614	42·1
Wiltshire	404,946	80,989	17·9
Gloucestershire	394,620	78,924	14·9
Dudley	234,694	78,231	13·8
Harrow	156,443	78,222	13·8
Sunderland	232,797	77,599	12·9
West Sussex	542,595	77,514	12·8
Haringey	154,068	77,034	12·1
Solihull	153,811	76,906	11·9
Hampshire	1,145,556	76,370	11·1
Suffolk	457,809	76,302	11·0
Cambridgeshire	456,013	76,002	10·6
Sefton	227,659	75,886	10·4
Berkshire	530,136	75,734	10·2
North Yorkshire	529,778	75,683	10·1
North Tyneside	151,061	75,531	9·9
Bedfordshire	376,763	75,353	9·7
Buckinghamshire	445,193	74,199	8·0
Hertfordshire	740,342	74,034	7·7
Warwickshire	367,720	73,544	7·0
Calderdale	146,506	73,253	6·6
Humberside	658,589	73,177	6·5
Doncaster	219,205	73,068	6·3
Leicestershire	656,556	72,951	6·2
Shropshire	291,680	72,920	6·1
Hounslow	145,405	72,703	5·8
Avon	724,252	72,425	5·4
Essex	1,155,227	72,202	5·1
Cheshire	721,409	72,141	5·0
Surrey	789,981	71,816	4·5
Lincolnshire	430,072	71,679	4·3
Kirklees	286,714	71,679	4·3
Staffordshire	782,646	71,150	3·5
Kent	1,137,572	71,098	3·5
St. Helens	142,109	71,055	3·4
Derbyshire	710,048	71,005	3·3
Dorset	496,051	70,864	3·1
Hereford and Worcester	496,039	70,863	3·1
Sheffield	423,645	70,608	2·8
Cleveland	423,550	70,592	2·7
Wigan	232,319	70,400	2·5
Nottinghamshire	767,807	69,801	1·6
Hackney	139,261	69,631	1·3
Ealing	208,285	69,428	1·0
Norfolk	554,217	69,277	0·8
Bradford	345,322	69,064	0·5
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	343,405	68,681	−0·1
Northamptonshire	411,316	68,553	−0·2
East Sussex	547,293	68,412	−0·4
Somerset	341,523	68,305	−0·6
Devon	747,575	67,961	−1·1
Oxfordshire	407,181	67,864	−1·2
Salford	182,268	67,507	−1·8
Enfield	202,374	67,458	−1·8
Sutton	134,001	67,001	−2·5
Durham	468,838	66,977	−2·5
Wandsworth	200,904	66,968	−2·5
Bury	133,582	66,791	−2·8
Camden	133,455	66,728	−2·9
Walsall	200,122	66,707	−2·9
Gateshead	165,921	66,368	−3·4
Stockport	224,421	66,006	−3·9
Cities of London and Westminster	132,025	66,013	−3·9
Lancashire	1,054,449	65,903	−4·1
Leeds	546,978	65,901	−4·1
Bolton	197,249	65,750	−4·3
Wirral	261,549	65,387	−4·8
Oldham	168,020	64,623	−6·0
Newcastle upon Tyne	225,825	64,521	−6·1
Rotherham	193,142	64,381	−6·3
Liverpool	386,009	64,335	−6·4
Rochdale	154,332	64,305	−6·4
Wakefield	237,229	64,116	−6·7
Manchester	338,871	63,938	−7·0
Tameside	165,968	63,834	−7·1
Trafford	171,821	63,637	−7·4
Merton	126,924	63,462	−7·6
Wolverhampton	189,735	63,245	−8·0
South Tyneside	126,440	63,220	−8·0
Birmingham	757,658	63,138	−8·1
Cumbria	377,115	62,853	−8·5
Brent	187,910	62,637	−8·8
Havering	186,690	62,230	−9·4
Knowsley	123,019	61,510	−10·5
Croydon	245,301	61,325	−10·8
Richmond upon Thames	121,083	60,542	−11·9
Lewisham	181,432	60,477	−12·0
Islington	120,006	60,003	−12·7
Coventry	239,190	59,798	−13·0
Hillingdon	178,468	59,489	−13·4
Redbridge	177,607	59,202	−13·8
Bromley	235,884	58,971	−14·2
Sandwell	234,942	58,736	−14·5
Lambeth	175,664	58,555	−14·8
Northumberland	233,191	58,298	−15·2
Barking and Dagenham	115,500	57,750	−16·0
Barnsley	172,370	57,457	−16·4

Area	1985 electorate	Average electorate per constituency: Number	Average electorate per constituency: Percentage difference from national average
Southwark	171,769	57,256	−16·7
Bexley	169,947	56,649	−17·6
Barnet	224,263	56,066	−18·4
Tower Hamlets	112,036	56,018	−18·5
Greenwich	164,329	54,776	−20·3
Waltham Forest	164,264	54,755	−20·3
Newham	162,246	54,082	−21·3
Kingston upon Thames	102,317	51,159	−25·6
Kensington and Chelsea	101,448	50,724	−26·2
Hammersmith and Fulham	98,012	49,006	−28·7

Benefits

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for unemployment benefit were disallowed on availability grounds in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 and at the latest date for which figures are available; and whether these claimants are included in the overall unemployment totals.

Mr. Newton: The information available is given in the table. Claimants who are disallowed unemployment benefit on availability grounds are included in the unemployment totals if they continue to sign on as unemployed.

Year	Number
1979	36,500
1980	52,400
1981	49,400
1982	62,000
1983	57,200
1984	49,100
1985*	20,200

* Up to end June

Single-Parent Families

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of single parent families for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984, and at the present time.

Mr. Whitney: Estimates based on information from the 1981 census and the general household survey are available from 1979 to 1982:

One-parent families, Great Britain

Year	Number (thousands)
1979	840
1980	870
1981	900
1982	930

Note:
A one parent family comprises a lone parent with one or more dependant children aged under 16 or 16-18 and in full-time education.

Supplementary Benefits

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give details of the total cost of mortgage interest payments in respect of supplementary benefit recipients for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The estimated amount of money added in the assessment for mortgage interest and ground rent, together with the number of claimants for each year from 1979 is as follows:

Year	Claimants	Amount added in assessment (£ million)
1979	98,000	31
1980	134,000	71
1981	196,000	124
1982	235,000	170
1983	242,000	*150
1984	n/y/a	

* Excludes Ground Rent
Source: Annual Statistical Enquiries

Salmonellosis

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will request district health authorities, whenever there is an outbreak of salmonellosis or other bacterial food poisoning in hospital, to send to his Department the most recent copy of the environmental health officer's report on the hospital.

Mr. Hayhoe: Urgent consideration is being given to the guidance issued to health authorities on issues relating to food hygiene. The point raised by the right hon. Member and any recommendations in the forthcoming report of the Stanley Royd inquiry will be taken into account in developing procedures health authorities will be expected to follow in the event of any future outbreak.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were reported ill in hospital outbreaks of salmonellosis and other bacterial food poisoning in England and Wales in the six years 1979 to 1984; and if he will give the figures for each year by type of hospital.

Mr. Whitney: The information available from reports to the communicable disease surveillance centre is given in the table:

Persons reported ill in hospital outbreaks from salmonellosis and other bacterial food poisoning†*
Number of persons in England and Wales

Type of hospital	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Maternity	—	17	13	6	10	26
Children's	7	31	2	—	2	1
Psychiatric	543	258	102	354	150	301
Geriatric	31	92	48	78	132	555
General	109	52	111	331	236	118
Other	77	—	5	3	—	11
Not stated	21	13	—	6	34	8
Staff only	58	—	8	9	—	—
Total affected	846	463	289	787	564	1,020

* International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) Code 003.
† International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) Code 005.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many inpatients died because of salmonellosis or other bacterial food poisoning in the six years 1979 to 1984; and if he will give separate figures for each year.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows the numbers of deaths which occurred in National Health Service and non-NHS hospitals in England and Wales where the underlying cause of death was salmonellosis or other bacterial food poisoning (International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 9th revision 003 and 005) for the latest six years.

These statistics relate to persons who died in hospital; the location of the patient at the time of the acquisition of the infection is not known to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Number of deaths in hospital from salmonellosis and other bacterial food poisoning
England and Wales 1979-84

Year	*Number*
1979	50
1980	37
1981	33
1982	62
1983	44
1984	53
Total	279

ICD 9th revision 003 Other salmonella infections 005 Other food poisoning (bacterial)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many outbreaks of salmonellosis and other bacterial food poisoning there have been in the six years 1979 to 1984 in hospitals in England and Wales; and if he will give the figures for each year by type of hospital.

Mr. Whitney: The information available from reports to the communicable disease surveillance centre is given in the table.

Salmonellosis and other bacterial food poisoning† outbreaks in hospitals*
Number of outbreaks *England and Wales*

Type of hospital	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Maternity	—	2	3	3	2	6
Children's	1	5	1	—	1	1
Psychiatric	12	9	1	9	7	9
Geriatric	6	8	5	11	10	8
General	9	9	9	11	10	7
Other	3	1	3	2	—	2
Not stated	2	3	—	1	7	3
Staff only	4	—	2	2	—	1
Total	37	37	24	39	37	37

* International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) Code 003
† International Classification of Diseases (9th Revision) Code 005

Hospital Patients

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of people in hospital on an average day in 1984, in total and by type of hospital.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is given in the table.

NHS hospitals, 1984—England

Hospital type	*Average daily number of occupied* beds*
Acute	63,015·8
Mainly acute	48,891·2
Partly acute	13,762·2
Mainly long stay	7,357·9
Long stay	9,833·1
Geriatric	18,661·7

Hospital type	Average daily number of occupied* beds
Pre-convalescent	395·6
Convalescent	194·8
Rehabilitation	331·9
Isolation	36·7
Maternity	2,486·7
Mental illness	55,972·0
Mental handicap	37,331·6
Orthopaedic	1,233·0
Tuberculosis and chest	537·1
Children's (Acute)	1,531·6
Eye	510·0
Other	7,241·6
Total	269,324·5

*Occupancy figures are based on a midnight count and do not include patients who do not stay overnight in hospital.

AIDS Project (Manchester)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has formed an initial assessment of the grant application concerning the proposed Manchester AIDS project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The co-ordinator of the Manchester AIDS project has been advised in the first instance to discuss financial support with the regional and district health authorities which have powers to give grants to projects serving a local area. My officials have expressed a willingness to discuss the project further with the project steering committee depending on the outcome of these local discussions.

Acute Psychiatric Beds

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he issues to regional and district health authorities about the provision of acute psychiatric beds; and whether the planning norms have been amended recently.

Mr. Whitney: Since March 1983 we have made available to health authorities a policy paper which brought together existing DHSS advice on a range of topics including planning guidelines. As regards the latter, it indicates that local circumstances will determine needs, which should be discussed locally with the professional people involved, but suggests that district analysis on these lines is likely to show a need for acute psychiatric beds in the range of 0·3/0·5 per thousand population in most districts.

Our officials first wrote to regional health authorities in 1982 to advise them that experience suggested that the tentative guideline of 0·5 per thousand, mentioned in the 1975 White Paper, was often too high for present psychiatric practice; they cited one regional health authority which had worked with a guideline of 0·35.

The hon. Member will find the current version of the policy paper is produced as annex 1 to the Government response to the Social Services Committee report on community care published on 20 November—Cmnd. 9674.

Board and Lodging (Statutory Instruments)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the title, number printed and cost of printing each of the booklets accompanying the April, October and November statutory instruments on board and lodgings.

Mr. Newton: The April 1985 regulations were accompanied by the booklet "Supplementary Benefit Board and Lodging Areas". 4,700 free issue booklets were printed at a total cost to the Department of £10,107. 1,000 HMSO books were also printed with a sale price of £6·40 a copy.

The October 1985 regulations included the booklet "Supplementary Benefit Board and Lodging Areas (second edition)". 3,850 free issue booklets were printed at a total cost to the Department of £5,748·84. 800 HMSO books were also printed with a sale price of £7·00 a copy.

The November 1985 regulations included the booklet "Supplementary Benefit Maximum Amounts, Initial periods and Board and Lodging Areas". 3,700 free issue booklets were printed at a total cost to the Department of £2,660. 1,100 HMSO books were also printed with a sale price of £7·00 a copy.

Note 1: Free issue booklets were provided by the Department for use in local DHSS offices and by recipients of the statutory instrument.

Note 2: The printing cost of all three priced books were borne by Her Majesty's Stationery Office with recovery in the usual way from proceeds from sales.

Fraud Investigators

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if any remuneration, additional to basic rates of pay, is offered to fraud officers, special investigators or specialist claim control officers on the basis of success rates or productivity.

Mr. Major: No.

Renal Dialysis

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many kidney dialysis machines there are per 1,000 of the population in each district health authority.

Mr. Whitney: The numbers of kidney dialysis machines in use in each health district are not recorded centrally. Information on the numbers of patients being treated by haemodialysis by each renal unit was given by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) in his reply to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) on 25 June at columns *378-382*. We would expect an individual machine to be provided for each patient dialysing at home, but machines provided for hospital dialysis might be used by several patients.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people died of kidney failure in each district health authority for each year from 1979 to date.

Mr. Whitney: Deaths from nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis — ICD 9th revision 580-589, OPCS code F350—for health authorities for 1980-83 are shown in tables 4 or 5 in Mortality Statistics, Area, DH5 series, copies of which are in the Library. These figures represent the major component of deaths that will end with renal failure. A slightly smaller number of deaths are certified to renal failure without mention of antecedent disease — chronic renal failure ICD 585, and renal failure, unspecified ICD 586 — but these are not

available on the published microfiche because of the restricted cause list used. These figures can be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mortality statistics are derived from the underlying cause of death, which is the disease or condition initiating the sequence of events leading to death. There will be an appreciable number of deaths where renal failure occurs as a terminal event of a disease, such as diabetes, where it is not classified as the underlying cause.

Social Security Review

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will be publishing a range of illustrative figures showing the effects of the proposals of the social security review in the proposed White Paper or separately from it.

Mr. Newton: Illustrative figures will be published with the White Paper. The form of publication is not yet decided.

Health and Personal Social Services (Statistics)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he is now able to give figures for 1984 to update table 3.14 a of health and personal social services statistics for England 1982;

(2) if he will update table 3.1 of health and personal social services statistics for England 1982 by giving figures for 1981 to 1983 and such figures as are available for 30 March 1985.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Severe Disablement Allowance

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will classify awards of severe disablement allowance to *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women according to whether they (i) were exempt from the 80 per cent. test on the grounds of age, (ii) were passported to the 80 per cent. test or (iii) passed the 80 per cent. test.

Mr. Newton: The information as at 19 November is as follows:

	Men	*Single and divorced women and widows*	*Married women*
Exempt from disablement condition (under 20 when incapacity arose or claim links with non-contributory invalidity pension or housewives non-contributory invalidity pension)	1,708	1,234	207
Passported to disablement condition	248	176	1,425
Disablement condition satisfied	141	74	641
	2,097	1,484	2,273

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* favourable and *(b)* unfavourable decisions on applications for severe disablement allowance have been made to date.

Mr. Newton: 5,854 and 4,311 respectively, as at 19 November.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will classify refusals of severe disablement allowance to *(a)* men, *(b)* single women and *(c)* married women according to the following reasons: (i) over pension age, (ii) not incapable of work, (iii) failed the 80 per cent. test, (iv) failed residence and presence conditions and (v) other.

Mr. Newton: The available information as at 19 November is as follows:

	Men	*Single and divorced women and widows*	*Married women*
Over pension age	208	116	346
Not incapable of work	38	16	58
Disablement condition not satisfied	453	247	1,701
Other	381	217	503
Total	1,080	596	2,635

Separate information is not available on the number who failed the residence or presence conditions. These cases are included under "other".

Board and Lodging

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is his best estimate of the numbers of people currently in board and lodging accommodation who will leave their present accommodation as a result of the coming into force on 28 April 1986 of the maximum prescribed in the regulations;

(2) what is his best estimate of the numbers of people currently in board and lodging at rates above the maximum prescribed in the regulations.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the precise form requested. However, I assume that my hon. Friend is concerned with the position of people in receipt of supplementary benefit as boarders at 28 April 1985 who received transitional protection for one year of the amount in payment at that time. The object of such protection was to give the people concerned ample time to make alternative arrangements. However, if for any reason anyone who received protection for a period up to a year has difficulty in meeting his charges as a result of the ending of protection at the end of April next year, it is open to local authorities, charitable bodies or others to top up the then prevailing maximum without affecting the claimant's benefit. My right hon. Friend also now has power, in circumstances of exceptional hardship, to extend the period of transitional protection beyond one year.

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many establishments offering board and lodging currently charge more than the prescribed maximum.

Mr. Newton: I regret that it is not practicable to give this information, since it would involve, among other things, establishing the charges of every hotel in the country.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when the hon. Member for Birkenhead can expect a reply to the letter he wrote to the Minister for Social Security, the hon. Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton) on 9 November 1984 on attendance allowance and which he has followed up by telephone calls and copied the original letter on 19 October 1985.

Mr. Newton: I wrote to the hon. Member on 26 November and regret the error which has led to the earlier delay in replying to him.

Pharmacists (Contracts)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what future discussions are planned with the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee on the implementation of the new contract;

(2) if he will, in this Session of Parliament, introduce legislation to implement the new contract negotiated with the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985]: There are no present plans for discussions with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee specifically on implementation of the new contract. Full implementation of the agreement must await the necessary primary legislation which will be introduced as soon as possible.

Dental Charges

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has any plans to alter the charge system for patients who receive dental treatment under the National Health Service;

(2) what recent representations he has received supporting changes in the charge system for dental treatment under the National Health Service;

(3) if he has made any estimate of the percentage level at which a proportional charge system would have to be levied for dental treatment under the National Health Service in order to raise the same level of revenue as is guaranteed by the current system of dental charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985]: Representations have been received mostly from dentists, about the present system of dental charges. These include suggestions for a return to the previous system, a wholly proportional system and a system under which dentists would fix their own charges, but there would be a state subsidy for basic treatment.

If a wholly proportional system had been introduced on 1 April 1985, the level of charge necessary to raise the required level of revenue would have been 72 per cent. The desirability of changing the current system will be considered when charges are next reviewed.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Banks (Lending Activities)

6. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the implications of the use by banks of note issuance facilities, revolving underwriting facilities, note purchase facilities and similar instruments in connection with their lending activities for the Bank of England's supervision of their prudential lending limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Bank supervisors must ensure that the acceptance of new types of risk is properly controlled —without unreasonably inhibiting market development. I understand that the Bank of England takes account of these instruments in monitoring bank risk—asset ratios.

Value Added Tax

15. **Mr. Cash** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will seek to raise the threshold for value added tax to £50,000.

Mr. MacGregor: The European Commission sixth VAT directive restricts increases in the VAT registration threshold to those which maintain its original value in real terms. The Government consider the directive unduly restrictive and are pressing for an amendment to allow member states greater flexibility in determining their threshold.

21. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the building trade about the value added tax threshold.

Mr. Moore: Eleven since the last Budget, of which seven advocated a reduction or the abolition of the VAT threshold.

25. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussion he has had with officers of the Central Council of Physical Recreation about representations they have made seeking a reduction in the amount of value added tax now being paid by sports associations.

Mr. Brooke: The council was consulted by Customs and Excise about proposals by the European Commission for directives on VAT which, if adopted, could affect among other matters the VAT payable by non-profit-making sports organisations. The council's views have been noted.

Manufacturing Industry

16. **Mr. Wrigglesworth** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the extent of the decline in manufacturing output since May 1979.

Mr. Lawson: Manufacturing output has fallen by 8 per cent. since May 1979 but non-manufacturing output has risen by 11½ per cent. and GDP as a whole has risen by 6¼ per cent.

Firemen (Bounty Payments)

17. **Sir David Price** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the Inland Revenue has decided that bounty payments for long service for retained firemen on the completion of 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 and 35 years of qualifying service should be taxable, when comparable bounty payments to members of the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve are free of tax.

Mr. Moore: If a retained fireman or any other employee receives a bounty payment, it is part of the income from his employment and taxed accordingly.

Exceptionally, the training bounty paid to members of the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve is exempted from tax by legislation introduced in 1947.

Pound Sterling (Value)

18. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current value of the pound sterling in real terms compared to its value in 1979.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In real terms, the sterling index averaged 112·1 in 1979 and 117·2 in august 1985.

Exchange Control Act 1947

19. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will propose the repeal of the Exchange Control Act 1947 in the next Finance Bill.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I have noted my Hon. Friend's suggestion. He will recall that exchange controls were abolished in 1979 and the Act has been inoperative since then.

Employees (Profit Sharing Schemes)

20. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies have now registered profit sharing share schemes for the benefit of their employees.

Mr. Moore: A total of 1,001 employee share schemes have been approved by the Inland Revenue. Some 507 are profit sharing schemes and 494 are saving-related share option schemes. Some companies have established both types of scheme.

Nationalised Industries (Sale)

22. **Mr. Alton:** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans for spending the revenue raised from proposed sales of nationalised industries.

24. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans for replacing the income brought in by nationalised industries now privatised.

Mr. MacGregor: The effect of privatisation on public finances is one of the many factors that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer takes into account in his Budget judgment.

41. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the loss of revenue to his Department from the sale of publicly owned state assets since 1979.

Mr. Moore: It is not possible to estimate the overall effect on Government revenues of the privatisation programme since 1979. It is not known what the effect on public finances would have been if the privatised businesses had remained within the public sector. In so far as the performance and profitability of these businesses improves in the private sector, they are likely to pay additional tax.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

23. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England regarding the state of Johnson Matthey Bank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets the Governor regularly for confidential discussions about a wide range of matters.

32. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information was available to him on the position of the Johnson Matthey Bank when a decision was made to effect a rescue operation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor told the House on 17 December last year, at column 23, the Governor notified him of the action which the Bank intended to take shortly before the rescue of JMB was announced.

Unit Labour Costs

26. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he makes of the contribution made by unit capital cost to unit labour costs.

Mr. MacGregor: Unit capital costs do not contribute directly to unit labour costs, but the two are related through substitution between capital and labour. However, short term movements in unit labour costs are mainly affected by other determinants, in particular by what happens to pay.

Public Sector Pay

27. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his Department's performance in keeping public sector pay rises within his guidelines.

Mr. MacGregor: Our policy for public sector pay has been and remains that it should reflect the need to recruit, retain and motivate staff of the calibre required within what can be afforded.

South-west Cumbria

28. **Mr. Franks** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the amount of new finance available to south-west Cumbria as a result of his autumn statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is not yet available. The autumn statement included an overall figure for local authority relevant current spending. The grant-related expenditure assessments for different authorities are currently being determined and the details will be announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment next month.

City of London (Insurance)

29. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the annual level of invisible earnings from the insurance sector of the City of London for the latest available year.

Mr. Ian Stewart: In 1984 net overseas earnings by United Kingdom insurance institutions were £1,585 million.

Income Tax

30. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his proposals to cut the basic rate of income tax.

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend will consider all the options for income tax changes at the appropriate time.

36. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what circumstances he expects to be able to announce tax cuts in the next Budget.

Mr. Moore: A forecast for the economic prospects for 1986 was published in the autumn statement which was laid before the House on 12 November by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The scope for changes in tax rates and allowances will be assessed in the run-up to the next Budget. My right hon. Friend will announce any such changes in his Budget statement.

38. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will publish his Green Paper on the reform of personal income taxation.

39. **Mr. Tim Smith** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish the Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation.

Mr. Moore: We expect to publish the Green Paper, within the next few months. It will discuss a number of personal tax issues in addition to the tax treatment of husband and wife.

Inflation

31. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the current rate of inflation.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

Economic Strategy

33. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss his economic strategy.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend will discuss his economic strategy at the meeting of the National Economic Development Council on 4 December.

Scientific Research

34. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, in the next public expenditure White Paper, he will provide a specific programme collating all Government expenditure on scientific research.

Mr. MacGregor: The next public expenditure White Paper will organise spending primarily by Department. A full analysis of expenditure on research 1981-82 to 1986-87 is provided in table 2.1 of the annual review of Government funded research and development 1984, which is available in the Library. Paragraph 1.6 and 1.7 of that report explain the basis on which the figures have been prepared. The 1985 annual review will be published around the end of the year.

Economic Progress

35. **Mr. Pike** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent the measures announced in the autumn statement are designed to reduce the gap in the different economic conditions in the north and the south of the United Kingdom.

Mr. MacGregor: All regions in the United Kingdom will benefit from the 3·5 per cent. real increase in economic activity expected this year and the further 3 per cent. increase expected in 1986.

Heritage Assets (Taxation)

37. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward proposals to lessen the impact of capital taxation on heritage assets.

Mr. Moore: The capital taxes code already has provisions to lessen its impact on heritage assets. We have made a number of improvements in recent years, but if my hon. Friend has any suggestions for further improvement I shall be glad to consider them.

Pensions

40. **Mr. Stern** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the implications for pensions policy of recent proposals by the Centre for Policy Studies for the liberation of individual pension funds, a copy of which has been sent to him; and if he will arrange for the Treasury to initiate a detailed study of the economic and revenue implications of such proposals.

Mr. Moore: We shall carefully consider the recent proposals published by the Centre for Policy Studies.

Regional Policy

42. **Mr. Holt** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what aspects of his Department's fiscal policy are intended specifically to assist deprived regions.

Mr. MacGregor: Our fiscal policies are intended to promote sustained economic growth throughout the country. Specific assistance for such regions is not generally provided through the tax system, but in other ways. Special tax provisions do however apply in enterprise zones.

Customs and Excise (Prosecutions)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals under arrest or facing prosecution under the Customs and Excise Management Acts were also working for other Departments of the United Kingdom Government at the time the alleged offences were committed.

Mr. Brooke: This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Motor Tax

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total amount raised in motor tax in the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Brooke: I assume the hon. Member is interested in all the main indirect taxes on the purchase and use of motor vehicles. Receipts in 1984-85 were as follows:

	£ million
Car tax	744·7
Value added tax	*2,850·0

	£ million
Excise duty on petrol	†4,680·5
Excise duty on derv	†1,190·0
Vehicle excise duties	†2,219·0
	11,684·2

*Estimate based on consumers' expenditure on new and used cars, petrol and other motoring expenses, and business expenditure on cars (the VAT on which is non-deductible).

†Includes road freight, buses and coaches.

Trustee Savings Bank

Mr. Canavan asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the Trustee Savings Bank since the Scottish court decision that the Trustee Savings Bank Scotland belongs to its depositors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A small number of letters. As the House will be aware, formal notice of appeal has been lodged and the matter is therefore sub judice.

Government Expenditure

Mr. Adley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the net change in total Government expenditure as between 1979-80 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. MacGregor: Between 1979-80 and 1985-86 the public expenditure planning total has increased by £57 billion in cash terms. As a proportion of GDP, public spending increased from 43½ per cent. in 1979-80 to 46 per cent. in 1982-83, but has been falling since then, to 44½ per cent. in the current year and it is projected to fall further, to 41 per cent. in 1988-89.

Futures (Taxation)

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he is satisfied with the way in which the Inland Revenue is administering the taxation provisions in relation to futures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: Yes. Section 72 of this year's Finance Act provides—as proposed in my right hon. Friend's Budget speech—that profits on transactions in commodity and financial futures previously assessed under case VI of schedule D should be assessed to capital gains tax. However, it made no change where the taxpayer enters into such transactions in the course of a trade, in which case any profits remain liable to income tax or corporation tax under case I.

Whether in any particular instance the activities of a taxpayer amount to trading will turn on the facts of the matter as well as on the law. But in general a taxpayer, whether an individual or company, would not be regarded as trading in respect of transactions which were relatively infrequent or, for example, where the intention was to hedge specific investments; and an individual is unlikely to be regarded as trading as a result of purely speculative transactions in futures.

EC Budget Council

Mr. Thurnham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will report on the outcome of the latest meeting of the European Community's Budget Council.

Mr. Brooke: The Budget Council met in Brussels on 26-27 November to consider the European Parliament's amendments and modifications to the draft budget for 1986 which the Council established in September.

The Council established by qualified majority a revised draft budget amounting in total to some 34·6 billion ecu (some £21·6 billion at the budget exchange rate of 1·61 ecu to the £) in commitment appropriations and some 32·7 billion ecu (some £20·3 billion) in payment appropriations.

The revised draft budget, like the September version, provides for limiting the growth of agricultural market support expenditure in the existing 10 member states within the budget discipline guideline and for 567 million ecu (some £350 million) of agricultural guarantee expenditure in Spain and Portugal. It includes 1,400 million ecu (some £870 million) for the United Kingdom's VAT abatement.

The European Parliament's proposals called for additions of some 1·8 billion ecu to the payment appropriations for non-obligatory expenditure in the Council's September draft budget. The Council decided to respond by proposing to limit these additions to 821 million ecu, comprising 321 million ecu on account of enlargement, 400 million ecu for the so-called "cost of the past" overhang of past commitments in the regional development and social funds, and 100 million ecu in other budget lines.

The growth of non-obligatory expenditure compared with 1985 implied by these proposals is 1,210 million ecu (some £750 million) for commitment appropriations and 1,200 million ecu (some £745 million) for payment appropriations. The implied new "maximum rate" increases are some 14·6 per cent. for commitment appropriations and some 20·5 per cent. for payment appropriations.

Two member states, the United Kingdom and Ireland, for different reasons, opposed the revised draft budget, but were outvoted. I argued that, while it was axiomatic that the understandings on budgetary matters reached with Spain and Portugal during the accession negotiations must be fully respected, the Council should not propose special extra provision for the cost of the past" problem, which should be solved by reducing new commitments rather than increasing payments. The increase in non-obligatory expenditure proposed for this purpose represented a threat to budget discipline.

On food aid, the Council accepted the Parliament's proposal for establishing a new budget line for emergency food aid relief within the food aid chapter of the budget and reaffirmed its commitment to review the Community's food aid arrangements in the light of need.

The European Parliament will consider the Council's revised draft budget in the week beginning 9 December.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Soil Research Survey

Mr. Dalyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has to make 27 members of the Soil Research Survey of England and Wales redundant; what consultation has taken place with them; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: In January this year my right hon. Friend announced that, following a review of needs and priorities

in relation to soil research, my department's funding of the soil survey of England and Wales would remain unchanged in 1985-86 but would be reduced to about half its current level in 1986-87. This decision, which reflected the advice of the Priorities Board, also took account of my right hon. Friend's view that the soil survey had the capacity to develop its funding from commercial activities. My Department is in close touch with the soil survey on these matters and I understand that income from commercial work is rising. It is for the soil survey and the Agricultural and Food Research Council to determine the level of staffing in the survey in the light of the resources available from all sources.

Shardlow Hall Laboratory

Mr. Lawrence asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how the work done at Shardlow Hall agriculture laboratory compares with that of other Agriculture Development Advisory Service laboratories in England and Wales in each of the past three years.

Mrs. Fenner: The types of work undertaken at Shardlow Hall are similar to those undertaken at the other ADAS regional centres and subcentres in England and Wales, but are not comparable with the work undertaken by the central science laboratories or veterinary laboratories.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which will be the nearest laboratory, following the proposed closure of Shardlow Hall Agriculture Development Advisory Service laboratory, to which farmers in the Burton constituency may go for a milk test.

Mrs. Fenner: After closure of the ADAS laboratory at Shardlow Hall, the nearest laboratory to Burton providing similar services will be at Wolverhampton.

Food (Nutrition Labelling)

Mr. Gregory asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the implications of the proposed introduction of statutory fat content nutrition labelling for intra-Community barriers to trade raised by other European Community member states in relation to exports of food products.

Mrs. Fenner: Any proposals that I may make for fat labelling of food will be discussed with representatives of the European Commission in Brussels, and implementation of such proposals would take place in the light of those discussions. I have no indications at the present that other member states would take action against our exports if imports from them were required to carry fat labelling.

Dumping at Sea

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many licences for dumping toxic wastes at sea have been issued in the last five years;

(2) how much and what type of toxic waste has been dumped at sea in the last five years.

Mr. Gummer: With certain exemptions, which are codified in the Deposits in the Sea (Exemptions) Order 1985, all disposals to sea require a licence. Toxicity tests are undertaken whenever appropriate, and over the last five years 350 licences have been issued following such tests, permitting the disposal of 25·6 million tonnes of waste. Within this total 332 licences and 3·1 million tonnes related to industrial wastes, and 18 licences and 22·5 million tonnes to sewage sludge.

TRANSPORT

Mhari L

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Transport why the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley has not yet received a reply to his question relating to the Mhari L, tabled for priority written answer on 13 November; when he can expect to receive a reply; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Member's question was answered on 21 November. I have written to him apologising for the delay.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley on 21 November, *Official Report*, column *267*, why reports on the loss of ships are not published; if he will reconsider his decision not to publish this report; and if he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Ridley: Reports of inquiries into shipping casualties are confidential to the Department. They enable the Department to establish the cause of the casualty and to consider what further action is required in the interest of marine safety. However, to be as helpful as possible the Department releases, to interested parties, a factual report based upon the surveyor's findings. I shall send a copy of the report on the Mhari L to the hon. Member.

Channel Link

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the involvement of British Steel and British Shipbuilders in the Euroroute consortium will affect the financial criteria laid down by Her Majesty's Government that the scheme should be entirely privately financed.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. Their limited involvement has been authorised on the basis that it does not extend to the financing of construction of a Channel fixed link and that it carries no future financial commitment.

M1

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, further to the answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth on 14 November, *Official Report*, column *262*, if he will give the numbers and types of vehicles involved in accidents on the M1 in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1984.

Mr. Ridley: Numbers and types of vehicles involved in personal injury accidents on the M1—1979 and 1984:

	1979	*1984*
Pedal cycles	0	3
Two wheeled motor vehicles	48	59
Cars	1,201	1,389
Buses and coaches	27	26

	1979	*1984*
Light goods vehicles	105	112
Heavy goods vehicles	413	251
Other motor vehicles	13	11
Other vehicles	4	0
All vehicles	1,811	1,851

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport on the basis of the approximate figures given in the answer to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth on 14 November, *Official Report*, column 262, if he will give the approximate total cost of adding one lane in each direction south bound of the M1 from its junction with the M6.

Mr. Ridley: On the basis of the approximate figures given to my hon. Friend on 14 November, the basic cost of adding one lane in each direction is likely to be between £200 million and £260 million.

The total cost would be increased by factors such as the need for retaining walls and railways diversions along certain stretches and the provision of structures, but it is not possible to estimate the effect of these without detailed investigation.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport further to his reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth dated 14 November, *Official Report*, column 262, when his review of the carrying capacity of the M1 is likely to be completed.

Mr. Ridley: The carrying capacity of the M1 is under review, not in isolation, but as part of the wider examination of motorway capacity announced in "National Roads England 1985" which is aimed at identifying stretches that may need relief or widening by the end of the century. At this stage, it is not possible to predict how long the work will take to complete.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth dated 14 November, *Official Report*, column 262, what plans exist for improving road safety on that section of the M1 motorway between junction 4 and junction 13.

Mr. Ridley: A number of measures are planned which should contribute to greater safety. They include renewal and enhancement of signs, improvements to the traffic capacity of slip roads and extra safety fencing.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many closed-circuit television cameras are installed on the M1 motorway between Wakefield and London; and what are their specific purposes.

Mr. Ridley: No closed circuit television cameras are installed on the M1 motorway.

Traffic Statistics

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport by how much road traffic is forecast to increase by the year 2000 in *(a)* England, *(b)* urban areas, *(c)* Staffordshire and *(d)* Stoke on Trent.

Mr. Ridley: The Department produces high and low national traffic growth forecasts representing a range of economic assumptions. Local forecasts down to district level are derived from the national figures: road traffic is forecast to increase by between 15 per cent. and 35 per cent. in England up to 2000. The figures for Staffordshire county are 18 per cent. and 39 per cent. and these also apply to the Stoke-on-Trent city council area. No separate aggregate forecasts covering urban areas as a whole are available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the traffic in the latest traffic survey of the A50 passing through the Meir at Stoke on Trent, was *(a)* cars, *(b)* vans and *(c)* lorries; and what has been the increase in the number of vehicles in each of the categories passing through the Meir along the A50 at peak weekday hours over the last *(a)* five years and *(b)* 10 years.

Mr. Ridley: The latest traffic survey was carried out in September 1985 by Staffordshire county council during peak hours. The previous comparable survey was carried out in June 1979 by Stoke county council. The results are set out in the table:

	Total Cars	*Light Vehicles (up to 30 cwt)*	*Heavy Vehicles (over 30 cwt)*
1979	1139	1115	224
1985	1853	1473 185	195
Per cent change	+38	+49	−13

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions his Department has been given, or made estimates of, future traffic flows on the A50 through the Meir, Stoke on Trent; who made the estimates; and if he will list all the estimates for traffic flows at the peak weekday times for the years between 1990 and 2000, giving the date when each estimate was made.

Mr. Ridley: Estimates of future traffic flows on A50 were originally prepared for the public consultation exercise in 1976 on the alternative routes for a southern bypass of Stoke. These have since been updated to reflect both changing traffic patterns and revisions to the national traffic growth forecasts.

Traffic figures in the form requested by the right hon. Member are not available, but the following information may be helpful.

Year of estimate	*1979*	*1983*	*1985*
Estimated flows in			
1990	27,100-30,900	27,100-30,900	23,400-26,000
1995	28,500-33,700	28,500-34,000	24,500-28,600
2000	29,500-35,800	29,500-36,900	25,300-30,800

These figures show the average flows for a 16-hour period in the month of August, using low and high growth assumptions. Peak hour flows can be broadly taken as 10 per cent. of the above figures.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current average weekday traffic flow at the peak time on the A50 where it passes through the Meir in Stoke on Trent; and if he will give the figures for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.

Underpasses

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many underpasses he has sanctioned in the last year

in urban areas; how many were *(a)* two-lane and *(b)* three-lane; and what were the estimated peak hour traffic flows for each underpass for the years at the end of the century.

Mr. Ridley: I have sanctioned four such underpasses in the last year. Further details of these are as follows:

Scheme	*Standard*	*Estimated peak hour traffic flows*	*Design year*
A406-Great Cambridge Road (A10) Greater London	Dual 2 lane	*3,000	1988
A40 Ealing, Western Circus, Greater London	Dual 2 lane	*4,800	2006
A12 Hackney Wick —M11 Link Greater London	i. Dual 2 lane ii. Dual 3 lane	3000 4,000	2001 2001

* These figures do not take account of the New National Traffic Forecasts.

Bypasses

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the factors taken into account when decisions are made regarding the justification for bypasses.

Mr. Ridley: Before a scheme is admitted to the national road programme, I must be satisfied that it meets the objectives of the programme which are set out in "National Roads England 1985". Bypasses are then assessed on economic and environmental grounds. The economic factors taken into account are summarised in our two-part booklet "Getting The Best Roads For Our Money". The environmental factors are set out in our "Manual of Environmental Appraisal". Copies of these departmental publications are available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport at what stage of his Department's consideration of the Stoke southern bypass it became unjustified in the opinion of his Department; and for what reasons.

Mr. Ridley: It has been apparent for some time that the Stoke southern bypass was becoming increasingly difficult to justify in economic terms. Staffordshire county council's plans to build a Longton-Fenton bypass at about the same time as the southern bypass significantly added the doubt. However, further traffic data were assembled and analysed as agreed at the meeting between my hon. Friend the Minister of State and representatives of the local authorities in July 1984. This led to the decision announced following the further meeting with the local authority representatives on 16 October 1985 that we could not proceed now with a southern bypass of Stoke.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many major bypasses he has approved in the last year; where they are; what was the estimated traffic flow for each by the end of the century measured in terms of vehicles per day and vehicles per hour at peak time; and if he will give similar estimated figures for the Stoke southern bypass.

Mr. Ridley: I have approved 23 bypasses in the last year. Further details of these are as follows:

Scheme (Location)	*Traffic Flow vehicles per day*	*Design Year*
A43 Brackley Bypass (Northamptonshire)	13-22,000	2002
A43 Bulwick Bypass (Northamptonshire)	8-10,000	2001
A43 Towcester Bypass (Northamptonshire)	16-24,000	2002
A47 Billesdon Bypass (Leicestershire)	8-10,000	2001
A52 Bingham Bypass (Nottinghamshire)	10-12,000	2003
A1 Clifton-Stanning Bridge (Northumberland)	*21-26,000	2001
A19 Riccall and Barlby Bypass (North Yorkshire)	*5-12,000	2002
A616 Stocksbridge—M1 (South Yorkshire)	*8-18,000	2002
A65 Settle and Giggleswick Bypass (North Yorkshire)	*4-11,000	2002
A21 Pembury Bypass (North of A264) (Kent)	*28-32,000	2000
A21 Pembury Bypass (South of A264) (Kent)	*19-23,000	2000
A27 Havant-Chichester Bypass (Hampshire and West Sussex)	*23-32,000	2000
A27 Brighton Bypass (East and West Sussex)	*14-50,000	1999
A27 Fontwell Bypass (West Sussex)	*20-26,000	2000
A43/A421 Gosford Bypass (Section of Peartree Hill Wendlebury Oxfordshire)	*22-30,000	2004
A38 Saltash Bypass (Cornwall)	19-25,000	1998
A36 Warminster Bypass (Wiltshire)	10-20,000	1998
A36 Heytesbury Pypass (Wiltshire)	10-12,000	1998
A303 South Petherton-Broadway (Somerset)	16-26,000	1998
A35 Bridport Bypass (Dorset)	*9-12,000	1998
A41 Berkhamsted and King's Langley Bypasses (Hertfordshire)	*13-30,000	2001
A10 Buntingford Bypass (Hertfordshire)	*7-12,000	2001
A12 Martlesham Bypass (Suffolk)	*30-36,000	2003
A435 Evesham Bypass (Hereford and Worcester)	14-18,000	2002
Similar estimated figures for the Stoke southern bypass are below:		
Stoke Southern Bypass	8,500-11,000	2004

* These figures do not take account of the New National Traffic forecast.

I do not have readily available the figures for the individual schemes of vehicles per hour at peak time. As a general guide, however, approximately 10 per cent. of daily traffic flow occurs during peak hours.

Stoke-Derby Link

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library the consultants' report updating the traffic model on the Stoke-Derby link.

Mr. Ridley: While the work of updating the local traffic model is substantially complete, the consultants' report will not be finalised until early next year. However, I shall ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to arrange a presentation of the relevant data for the right hon. Member.

British Rail

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will issue a general direction to British Rail

that any future fare rises should be restricted to lines or services which have established a 90 per cent. reliability; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. It is entirely British Rail's responsibility to determine fares, but we have told the chairman of the railways board that improved efficiency must make a full contribution to keeping fare increases to reasonable levels.

M25 (Construction Defects)

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Transport what reasons he has been offered by W. S. Atkins and Partners, consulting engineers on the Reigate-Leatherhead section of the M25, for the delay in producing their determination where responsibility for defects in the construction of this section lie.

Mr. Ridley: The consultant has not yet received the required full and detailed particulars of the contractor's claims concerning these.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what were his reasons for declining consent for London Regional Transport to lay a private Bill for the eastern extension of the docklands light railway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Government believe that any further investment in the docklands light railway should be privately funded, and that the railway should be owned and operated in the private sector. There are no proposals at present for the private funding of the eastward extension.

Speed Limits

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will replace existing speed limit signs on motorways with signs showing 70 miles per hour.

Mr. Ridley: I have no plans to do so. National speed limits are not generally signed numerically on any roads, including motorways. The current motorway sign, placed only at the entrances to motorways, denotes that the motorway regulations apply; these include the 70 mph limit unless there are specific signs showing a lower limit is in force.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 November 1985

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number and percentage of jobs lost in the northern region and in Britain between June 1979 and June 1985 in (i) all manufacturing industries, (ii) service industries, (iii) all industries, (iv) shipbuilding and (v) engineering industries and *(b)* the numbers of long-term unemployed as a proportion of all those in (1) full-time employment and (2) all employment in the northern region and in Britain in June 1979 and June 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following table contains the changes for the areas, dates and categories specified. Separate statistics are available for the shipbuilding and engineering industries only at national level. At regional level they are included in the metal goods, engineering and vehicles industries — division 3 of the 1980 standard industrial classification.

Changes in the numbers of employees in employment between June 1979 and June 1985

	Northern region		*Great Britain*	
	Thousand	*Per cent.*	*Thousand*	*Per cent.*
Manufacturing industries	−125	−31	−1,743	−25
Service industries	−30	−5	+361	+3
All industries and services	−219	−18	−1,812	−8
Metal goods, engineering and vehicles	−60	−33	−781	−23
Shipbuilding and repairing	NA	NA	−51	−36
Mechanical engineering	NA	NA	−250	−24
Electrical and electronic engineering	NA	NA	−104	−14
Instrument engineering	NA	NA	−15	−12

The number of registrants unemployed for over one year in the northern region and Great Britain in July 1979 was 32,521 and 340,543 respectively. The number of claimants unemployed for over one year on this basis for July 1985 was 106,502 and 1,269,286. Figures for long-term unemployment are only calculated quarterly.

It is difficult to make comparisons of long-term unemployment between 1979 and 1985 because of the change in the basis of the count in October 1982, the 1983 Budget provisions which mean that some men, mainly aged 60 and over, no longer need to sign on at unemployment benefit offices to receive benefit, and the change to a ward-based system for allocating claimants to localities.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Paymaster General how many people were in *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time employment in the Wirral and Chester travel-to-work areas in 1979, and at the latest available date.

Mr. Alan Clark: Comprehensive employment statistics for travel-to-work areas are not available except for dates when censuses of employment are taken. Censuses have been taken triennially since 1978 and the latest results are for September 1981.

Results of the 1978 census of employment are not available for the travel-to-work areas announced last year, but figures for the area covered by the old Chester and Birkenhead travel-to-work areas, which corresponds most closely to the Wirral and Chester travel-to-work area, are as follows:

Employees in employment

Thousands

	Full-time	*Part-time*	*All*
1978	146·4	46·3	192·7
1981	140·0	43·4	183·3

More up-to-date employment figures for travel-to-work areas will become available following the publication of the 1984 census of employment in the spring of 1986.

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General what is the breakdown of unemployed people *(a)* by sex and *(b)* by duration for each of the years since 1979 for the London borough of Wandsworth.

Mr. Alan Clark: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the breakdown of unemployed claimants by sex and duration for October 1984 and October 1985. Statistics of unemployment for local authority districts are derived from the new ward-based system. At present the analysis by duration is only available from April 1984 onwards, but information back to June 1983 will shortly be available.

London borough of Wandsworth

	11 October 1984		*10 October 1985*	
	Males	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Duration of unemployment in weeks				
One or less	347	200	307	202
Over 1 and up to 2	358	225	349	217
Over 2 and up to 4	562	327	581	356
Over 4 and up to 6	628	425	620	397
Over 4 and up to 8	390	212	395	225
Over 8 and up to 13	853	508	863	457
Over 13 and up to 26	1,611	829	1,676	934
Over 26 and up to 39	1,186	492	1,085	525
Over 39 and up to 52	897	381	797	352
Over 52 and up to 65	743	303	736	309
Over 65 and up to 78	535	165	533	186
Over 78 and up to 104	901	250	800	220

	11 October 1984		10 October 1985	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Over 104 and up to 156	1,147	323	1,163	350
Over 156 and up to 208	704	133	751	198
Over 208 and up to 260	391	52	514	95
Over 260	243	43	459	96
Grand total	11,496	4,868	11,629	5,099

Crime Prevention

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places are currently taken on the community programme for crime prevention projects.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have been asked to reply. Information about numbers on this type of community programme project is not currently available. However, it is being collated as part of the initiative being undertaken with my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to ensure that worthwhile and practical crime prevention projects are mounted, as the programme expands to 230,000 places. I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as the information is available.

Ault and Wiborg Paint Factory, Perivale

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General if the Health and Safety Executive is satisfied with the current and proposed standards of health and safety at the Ault and Wiborg paint factory in Perivale; and if will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Health and Safety Executive has required improvements to the standards of health and safety at the factory. When the work is complete, the standards required will have been met.

Pneumoconiosis (Compensation Payments)

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General how many cases have been approved for compensation payments during the past 12 months under the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers Compensation) Act 1979; what has been the average payment made in these cases; what is the total number of cases for which payment has been made since this Act came into force; and what is the total compensation paid over the period and the average compensation corresponding to these figures.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is as follows:

	Approved applications	Total paid £	Average payment £
1 November 1984 to 31 October 1985	67	427,956	6,387
4 July 1979 to 31 October 1985	4,527	26,359,136	5,823

I would also like to take this opportunity to correct the figures I gave in my reply to the question on 10 July 1985 at column *465*. The figures for the period 4 July 1979 to 30 June 1985 should have read:

	Approved applications	Total paid £	Average payment £
	4,488	26,088,388	5,813
and not			
	4,488	27,037,524	6,024

Sunday Trading

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his reply of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *326*, what is his estimate of the number of small businesses which would be affected by the estimated loss of 20,000 retail jobs following the deregulation of Sunday trading.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are not in a position to make such an estimate. The study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies which indicated that up to 20,000 jobs may be lost did not make any estimate of the number of small businesses which could be affected.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his reply of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *326*, what information he has as to the percentage of retailers who expect an increase in sales following the deregulation of Sunday trading.

Mr. Alan Clark: A number of retailers have indicated that they expect sales to increase following the deregulation of Sunday trading, but we are not in a position to estimate what proportion of retailers as a whole expect increases.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General whether he has had any discussions with representatives of the small retail trade or its employees about the employment implications of the deregulation of Sunday trading: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: We have had no such discussions, but Ministers at the Home Office have met employee representatives.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his reply of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *326*, what assumptions are made in the estimate that 22,000 new jobs could be generated following the deregulation of Sunday trading as to the relative growth of small retail outlets on the one hand and larger retail concens on the other.

Mr. Alan Clark: We are not in a position to make such an estimate. The Institute for Fiscal Studies who suggested that a 2 per cent. increase in sales may lead to an additional 22,000 jobs did not allocate these new jobs between firms of different sizes.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to his reply of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *326*, he will list those reasons not specified in that answer as to why he regards as pessimistic the assessment that 20,000 jobs could be lost following the deregulation of Sunday training.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Institute for Fiscal Studies' assessment takes no account of the fact that some shops already trade on Sunday. Nor did it take into account the possibility that deregulation of Sunday trading may increase jobs in related sectors of the economy.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Advancement of Women

Ms. Jo Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he has had any meetings with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementation of those parts of the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women relevant to his Department; and if he has any future plans for such meetings;

(2) what steps he is taking to evaluate the progress in implementing those parts of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women which apply to his Department; what resources he has allocated to this; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans he has for implementing paragraph 58 of the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women, relating to the collection of statistics on the situation of women;

(4) whether he will establish a special office within his Department to monitor periodically and accelerate the process towards the equitable representation of women along the lines of paragraph 88 of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Tom King: The final report of the Nairobi conference has only recently become available and I am considering what steps might be appropriate in respect of Northern Ireland.

Women Appointees

Ms. Jo Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those bodies to which his Department makes appointments, the number of appointees and the number of these who are women.

Mr. Tom King: The Northern Ireland bodies to which I make appointments or to which appointments are made by Northern Ireland Departments subject to my direction and control are listed with the total number of appointees and the number of women currently serving on each of these bodies:

Body	*Total*	*Males*	*Females*
Department of Agriculture			
Agricultural Research Institute	9	9	—
Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland	21	21	—
Foyle Fisheries Commission	4	4	—
Livestock Marketing Commission for Northern Ireland	7	6	1
Milk Marketing Board	13	13	—
Northern Ireland Agricultural Wages Board	15	15	—
Northern Ireland Drainage Council	17	17	—
Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority	6	6	—
Northern Ireland Water Council	15	14	1
Pigs Production Development Committee	8	8	—
Water Appeals Commission	2	2	—
Total	117	115	2
Department of Economic Development			
Belfast Harbour Commissioners	14	14	—
Board of Directors:			
Harland & Wolff Ltd.	15	15	—
Short Bros. Ltd.	11	11	—
Compensation Tribunal (Loss of Employment through Civil Unrest)	3	3	—
Committees for the Employment of Disabled People (three)	39	33	6
Enterprise Ulster	8	7	1
Equal Opportunities Commission	11	5	6
Fair Employment Agency	12	10	2
Fair Employment Appeals Board	3	3	—
Health and Safety Agency	9	8	1
Industrial Development Board	12	12	—
Labour Relations Agency	10	9	1
Local Enterprise Development Unit	9	8	1
Local Enterprise Development Unit—Area Panels (four)	27	26	1
Manpower Council	17	15	2
General Consumer Council	18	8	10
Northern Ireland Electricity Service Board	8	7	1
Northern Ireland Industrial Court	22	21	1
Northern Ireland Industrial Tribunals	147	133	14
Northern Ireland Training Authority	19	18	1
Northern Ireland Tourist Board	11	9	2
Londonderry Port and Harbour Commission	8	8	—
Training Boards for:			
Catering Industry	20	19	1
Clothing Industry	14	13	1
Construction Industry	14	14	—
Distributive Industry	21	20	1
Engineering Industry	15	15	—
Food and Drink Industry	22	21	1
Road Transport Industry	16	16	—
Textile Industry	16	16	—

Body	Total	Males	Females
Ulster Sheltered Employment Ltd.	6	5	1
Wages Council (nine)	161	149	12
Warrenpoint Harbour Authority	9	9	—
Total	747	680	67
Department of Education			
Armagh Observatory—Board of Governors	6	6	—
Arts Council for Northern Ireland—Board of Governors	18	15	3
Board of Governors:			
Stranmillis College of Education	16	15	1
St. Joseph's College of Education	17	17	—
St. Mary's College of Education	16	10	6
Council for Continuing Education	34	31	3
Education and Library Boards:			
Belfast	35	29	6
North Eastern	35	28	7
South Eastern	35	26	9
Southern	35	30	5
Western	31	20	11
Negotiating Machinery for Teachers' Salaries and Conditions of Service: Salaries negotiating Committee (schools)	11	11	—
Conditions of service negotiating committee (schools)	12	11	1
Negotiating committee for academic staff in three Colleges of Education	9	6	3
Negotiating committee for Further Education	8	8	—
Northern Ireland BTEC Liaison Committee	27	24	3
Northern Ireland Council for Educational Development	39	34	5
Northern Ireland Schools Examination Council	40	32	8
Sports Council for Northern Ireland	19	14	5
Queen's University Senate	5	3	2
Standing Conference for Primary Education	14	13	1
Standing Conference for Secondary Education	16	13	3
Standing Conference for Technical Education	16	15	1
The Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards	13	10	3
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum	16	14	2
Ulster Museum	16	13	3
UNESCO—Committee of	25	18	7
Youth Committee for Northern Ireland	25	21	4
Visitor to the University of Ulster	1	1	—
Total	590	488	102
Department of the Environment			
Committee for Nature Conservation	13	10	3
Fire Authority for Northern Ireland	17	15	2
Historic Buildings Council	14	12	2
Historic Monuments Council	16	14	2
Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland	13	10	3
National House Building Council—Northern Ireland Committee	7	7	—
Northern Ireland Construction Industry Advisory Council	10	10	—
Northern Ireland Housing Executive	10	8	2
Northern Ireland Local Government Superannuation Committee	17	16	1
Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company	7	7	
Northern Ireland Railways Ltd.	5	5	—
Citybus Ltd./Ulsterbus Ltd.	5	4	1
Northern Ireland Airports Ltd.	6	6	—
Planning Appeals Commission	10	8	2
Rent Assessment Panel	50	39	11
Ulster Countryside Committee	12	10	2
Compensation Appeals Tribunal	3	3	—
Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee	15	15	—
Lagan Valley Regional Park (Sub-Committee of UCC)	13	11	2
Total	243	210	33
Department of Finance and Personnel			
Northern Ireland Economic Council	15	14	1
Charities Advisory Committee	5	5	—
Lay Observer under the Solicitors Order	1	1	—
Public Service Training Council	9	9	—
Security Appeal Board	3	3	—
Statute Law Committee	16	16	—
Ulster Savings Committee	39	34	5
Vaughans Charity (Trustees)	5	4	1
Total	93	86	7

Body	Total	Males	Females
Department of Health and Social Services			
Attendance Allowance Board	8	5	3
Central Advisory Committees for:			
Medical	12	12	—
Dental	12	12	—
Nursing	17	7	10
Pharmaceutical	13	11	2
Personal Social Services	14	11	3
Distinction and Meritorious Service Award Committee	7	7	—
Health and Social Services Boards:			
Eastern	33	28	5
Northern	24	19	5
Southern	24	20	4
Western	24	20	4
Mental Health Review Tribunals	6	5	1
Northern Ireland National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting	35	15	20
Northern Ireland Central Services Agency for Health and Social Services	16	16	—
Poisons Board	10	8	2
Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Council	21	19	2
Northern Ireland Health and Social Services Training Council	13	10	3
Northern Ireland Council for Postgraduate Medical Education	31	30	1
Therapeutic Paramedical Advisory Committee	13	1	12
Tribunal to inquire into the Disqualification of Persons providing General Practitioner Services	14	13	1
Total	347	269	78
Northern Ireland Office			
Board of Visitors:			
Her Majesty's Prison, Armagh	12	5	7
Her Majesty's Prison, Belfast	24	16	8
Her Majesty's Prison, Magilligan	21	15	6
Her Majesty's Prison, Maze	30	20	10
Visiting Committee—Young Offenders' Centre—Hydebank Wood	18	9	9
Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland	4	4	—
Joint Consultative Committee for Prison Industries in Northern Ireland	5	5	—
Police Authority	18	14	4
Police Complaints Board for Northern Ireland	7	4	3
Probation Board for Northern Ireland	16	12	4
Rathgael and Whiteabbey Schools Management Board	15	11	4
Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights	13	9	4
District Electoral Areas Commission for Northern Ireland	1	1	—
Total	184	125	59

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Dispute

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the incidence of the practice of schoolchildren, some of whose teachers are on strike, being sent off school premises during periods in school hours when their teachers are not available; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have seen many reports of children being sent home or otherwise excluded from school premises because their teachers are taking disruptive action. Detailed information is however not available. I deplore any interruption of pupils' education arising from industrial action; apart from its effect on pupils' education and the deplorable example it sets, it results in inconvenience to both pupils and parents; harms relationships, behaviour and discipline; and risks children's safety and well-being. I look to local education authorities and schools to continue taking all possible measures to fulfil their responsibilities to the children in their care.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his response to the letter which he has received from the general secretary of the Professional Association of Teachers urging him to take measures to end the present teachers' dispute.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am considering the letter which I have received from Mr. Peter Dawson, the general secretary of the Professional Association of Teachers, dated 20 November. I hope to reply shortly and the hon. Member may then wish to approach Mr. Dawson to see whether he is willing to release the content of my reply.

University Teacher Training Courses

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what reply he has sent to the letter which he has received from the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers about the shortfall in applications for university teacher training courses.

Sir Keith Joseph: I received the letter referred to by the hon. Member on Tuesday 26 November and will be replying in due course.

Guidance Notes

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he intends to take to monitor the extent to which the guidance notes to local education authorities issued by his Department have been complied with.

Sir Keith Joseph: There is no intention to monitor the extent to which local education authorities comply with the guidance notes. These notes are only a guide to the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations, and have no statutory authority.

Student Awards

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he plans to re-establish his Department's former policy of publishing the breakdown of the main rates of grants allocated to university students.

Sir Keith Joseph: No.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he plans to amend the current criteria according to which rates of grants for university students are calculated.

Sir Keith Joseph: No.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science by how much he plans to increase the main rate of student grant outside London for the 1986-87 academic year.

Sir Keith Joseph: A statement about the level of student grants for the academic year 1986-87 will be made in the next few weeks.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what progress has been made with his review of student awards at degree and sub-degree level.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on 19 November 1985 at column *120*.

Students (Residence Costs)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will seek to amend section 8 of the Rent Act 1977 in respect of lettings to university students by educational institutions with a view to reducing board or residence costs incurred by students.

Sir Keith Joseph: No. The Government's policy is that charges for educational residential accommodation, which need to cover specified running costs, should be determined by the institutions concerned.

Advancement of Women

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to evaluate those parts of the United Nations Nairobi forward-looking strategies for advancement of women which apply to his Department; what resources he has allocated to this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government have made it clear on many occasions that it is essential to ensure that equal curricular opportunity is genuinely available at all levels within the education system, and our policies for education will continue to reflect that commitment to equal opportunities. We shall be considering the education recommendations in the Nairobi strategy document, many of which raise matters which are the responsibility of educational institutions themselves.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for the implementation of paragraph 58 of the Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women, which calls for the collection of timely and reliable statistics on the situation of women.

Mr. Chris Patten: All regular collections of data about pupils, students, leavers, examination results and teachers provide for separate identification of boys and girls, men and women. Statistical summaries, which normally include separate figures for each sex, are available for departmental consideration within the academic year to which they apply. Subsequent publication retains the distinction when thought to be important.

When ad hoc surveys are undertaken, it is customary to consider whether the design should allow for the preparation of reliable statistics for men and women separately. Such allowance is made in the majority of cases.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to seek to ensure that educational programmes enabling men to assume as much responsibility as women in the upbringing of children and the maintenance of the household are introduced at all levels of the educational system, as called for in paragraph 173 of the United Nations Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Chris Patten: Detailed decisions on the curriculum in educational institution are for the institutions themselves. The Government have made it plain that what is taught in schools should be relevant to adult life and that there can be no room for discrimination in the curriculum on grounds of sex. Her Majesty's Inspectorate have recently published a discussion document on home economics in their "Curriculum matters" series: that document takes it as one of its starting-points that home-making is equally important for boys and girls, and that in adult life the responsibilities of family life should be shared so that both men and women have sufficient opportunity to continue their own personal development.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to seek to implement paragraph 83 of the Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women, calling for new teaching methods which emphasise the equality of the sexes.

Mr. Chris Patten: Decisions on teaching methods and materials are for educational institutions themselves; attention should be given to the expectation and attitudes of girls when reaching those decisions.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to diversify women's vocational education and training in order to extend their opportunities for employment in occupations that are non-traditional or new to women, as called for in paragraph 171 of the United Nations Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government will continue to encourage girls and young women to take greater advantage of the full range of vocational education and training which is available. New approaches to education and training in the 14-18 age range are being explored by the technical and vocational education initiative, which is emphasing the need to avoid sex stereotyping; and the Government is seeking in a variety of ways to promote interest among girls and young women in the whole range of employment opportunities.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what meetings he has had with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementation of those parts of the Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women; and what future plans he has for such meetings.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend is considering the implications of the Nairobi conference recommendations for Government policies in education, and has not met, or made any plans to meet, the Equal Opportunities Commission. Officials at the commission with responsibility for education maintain regular contact with the Department.

Women Appointees

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* those bodies to which his Department makes appointments and the number of appointees; and if he will specify in each case the number of women appointees.

Sir Keith Joseph: The information requested is as follows:

List of bodies to which appointments are made by or on behalf of the Secretary of State and the number of appointments to each

	Men	*Women*
1 Advisory Board for the Research Councils	10	—
2 Advisory Committee for the Microelectronics Education Programme	5	—
3 Advisory Committee on Pesticides	11	—
4 Advisory Committee on the Misuse of Drugs	3	1
5 Agricultural and Food Research Council	15	—
6 Assessment of Performance Unit: Consultative Committee	9	3
7 British Museum (Natural History): Board of Trustees	1	—
8 Burnham Committees	1	—
9 Business & Technician Education Council	20	3
10 Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges: Board of Trustees	10	2
11 Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research: Governing Board	13	1
12 Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils	9	—
13 Council for the Accreditation of Correspondence Colleges	4	2
14 Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education	16	3
15 Council for National Academic Awards	23	3
16 Council for Educational Technology for the United Kingdom	27	3
17 Economic and Social Research Council	16	2
18 Further Education Staff College: Governing Body	16	4
19 Further Education Unit: Board of Management	8	—
20 Health Education Council	1	2
21 Medical Research Council	14	1
22 National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education	28	3
23 National Youth Bureau	1	—
24 Natural Environment Research Council	15	—
25 Royal Ballet School: Governing Body	1	1
26 School Curriculum Development Committee	14	9
27 Science and Engineering Research Council	14	1
28 Secondary Examination Council	13	2
29 United States/United Kingdom Educational Commission	2	1
30 University Grants Committee	18	1
30a Review of the UGC	8	1
31 University of Exeter: Court of Governors	—	1
32 University of London, Chelsea College: Council	1	—
33 London, Imperial College of Science and Technology: Governing Body	4	1
34 London, Royal Holloway College: Council	—	2
35 London, School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine: Court of Governors	1	—
36 Loughborough University of Technology: Council	1	—
37 University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology: Court of Governors	4	—
38 University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology: Council	1	—
39 St. David's University College, Lampeter: Council	1	—
40 Visiting Committee for the Cranfield Institute of Technology	8	—
41 Visiting Committee for the Open University	8	1
42 Visting Committee for the Royal College of Art	9	—
43 Voluntary Sector Consulative Council	10	3

University Lecturers (Pay)

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the implications for the morale of university lecturers of current promotion prospects and real salary levels; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him yesterday at column *628*.

Mr. Allen McKay asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the trend in university lecturers' salaries in real terms since 1979.

Sir Keith Joseph: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Dr. Hampson), on 19 November at column *127*.

Economic Awareness

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the bodies which have made representations to his Department about the introduction of the new subject entitled economic awareness which he is considering introducing into school curricula; and what discussions are presently taking place between officials of his Department and representatives of local education authorities and teachers on this issue.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department issued earlier this year a consultation letter to interested groups seeking comments on the Government's view that all pupils should

be equipped by the age of 16 with some economic awareness and understanding. The letter made clear our view that this objective could be achieved through a wide range of subjects in the curriculum and that translation of the principle into action in the schools was a professional matter for teachers. Responses to the consultation letter have been received from the local authority associations, teachers' organisations, individual local education authorities, employers' groups and individual companies, and from other interested groups and correspondents. These responses are being considered.

Students (Financial Support)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has given any consideration to the possibility of providing financial support for students at the age of 16 years.

Mr. Chris Patten: This is one of many aspects of policy on post-compulsory educational provision which is kept under review. However, the Government have no immediate plans to change the practice of successive previous Governments in regarding young people in non-advanced full-time education as primarily dependent on their parents for financial support until their 19th birthday. Parents receive child benefit in respect of such children, and in addition local education authorities have discretionary powers to pay grants and allowances to those in need.

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has responded to the proposal by local education authorities to establish a national joint council to discuss pay and conditions of service for teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes. I said as long ago as last March that I am prepared to consider the case for change, but that before coming to a firm view on the matter I should want to be satisfied that any new arrangements would offer the prospect of being a real improvement on the existing ones. I still await the detailed submission of such a case by the local authorities.

Trainees and Students (Status and Income)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what response he has made to the recommendation issued in the 24th Report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities 1984 (page xxviii) advocating a common status and income approach for all trainees and students.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government's response to the 24th report of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities 1984 was given in the course of the debate on the report in the other place on 22 October. I draw the hon. Member's attention to what Lord Young of Graffham said about the recommendation for a common status and income for all trainees and students in his closing speech.

Primary Schools (Inner Cities)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research has been conducted by his Department into methods of raising standards in primary schools in inner city areas.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government's policy, as set out in the White Paper "Better Schools", is to raise standards in all schools, including primary schools in inner city areas, and a number of research projects currently being funded by the Department will contribute towards that objective. In addition, pilot projects to improve the quality of education in selected primary schools in deprived urban areas have been approved for education support grant starting in 1985-86 in 12 local education authorities. These will cost approximately £3 million and will last from three to five years. Reports on the projects will be available to other schools and authorities.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Luncheon Facilities

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal, how many meals were served in the Westminster Hall cafeteria during the lunch period on 21 November; and how many Members of either House, Officers and staff working within the Palace were unable to be served.

Mr. Biffen: The number of meals served in the Westminster Hall cafeteria during the luncheon period of 21 November was 350. It is impossible to determine how many Members of either House, Officers or others within the Palace were unable to be served.

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal how many meals were served in the Strangers' cafeteria during the lunch period on 21 November; and how many Members of either House, Officers and staff working within the Palace were unable to be served.

Mr. Biffen: The number of meals served in the Strangers' cafeteria during the luncheon period of 21 November was 600. It is impossible to determine how many Members of either House, Officers or others within the Palace were unable to be served.

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal how many meals were served in the Members' cafeteria during the lunch period on 21 November; how many Members of either House and others working within the Palace were unable to be served; and how many strangers were unable to be served.

Mr. Biffen: The number of meals served in the Members' cafeteria during the luncheon period of 21 November was 150. It is impossible to determine how many Members of either House, Officers or others within the Palace were unable to be served.

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal how many meals were served in the Harcourt room during the lunch period on 21 November; and how many Members of either House, Officers and staff working within the Palace were unable to be served.

Mr. Biffen: The number of meals served in the Harcourt grill room during the luncheon period of 21 November was 80. It is impossible to determine how many Members of either House, Officers or others within the Palace were unable to be served.

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal how many meals were served in the Strangers' dining room during the lunch period on 21 November; and how many Members of either House, Officers and others within the Palace were unable to be served.

Mr. Biffen: The number of meals served in the Strangers' dining room during the luncheon period of 21 November was 80. It is impossible to determine how many Members of either House, Officers or others within the Palace were unable to be served.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Compensation

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement with regard to the payment of compensation to persons who have been wrongly convicted of criminal offences.

Mr. Hurd: There is no statutory provision for the payment of compensation from public funds to persons charged with offences who are acquitted at trial or whose convictions are quashed on appeal, or to those granted free pardons by the exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy. Persons who have grounds for an action for unlawful arrest or malicious prosecution have a remedy in the civil courts against the person or authority responsible. For many years, however, it has been the practice for the Home Secretary, in exceptional circumstances, to authorise on application ex gratia payments from public funds to persons who have been detained in custody as a result of a wrongful conviction.

In accordance with past practice, I have normally paid compensation on application to persons who have spent a period in custody and who receive a free pardon, or whose conviction is quashed by the Court of Appeal or the House of Lords following the reference of a case by me under section 17 of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968, or whose conviction is quashed by the Court of Appeal or the House of Lords following an appeal after the time normally allowed for such an appeal has lapsed. In future I shall be prepared to pay compensation to all such persons where this is required by our international obligations. The international convenant on civil and political rights [article 14.6] provides that:

"When a person has by a final decision been convicted of a criminal offence and when subsequently his conviction has been reversed, or he has been pardoned, on the ground that a new or newly discovered fact shows conclusively that there has been a miscarriage of justice, the person who has suffered punishment as a result of such conviction shall be compensated according to law, unless it is proved that the non-disclosure of the unknown fact in time is wholly or partly attributable to him".

I remain prepared to pay compensation to people who do not fall within the terms of the preceding paragraph but who have spent a period in custody following a wrongful conviction or charge, where I am satisfied that it has resulted from serious default on the part of a member of a police force or of some other public authority.

There may be exceptional circumstances that justify compensation in cases outside these categories. In particular, facts may emerge at trial, or on appeal within time, that completely exonerate the accused person. I am prepared, in principle, to pay compensation to people who have spent a period in custody or have been imprisoned in cases such as this. I will not, however, be prepared to pay compensation simply because at the trial or an appeal the prosecution was unable to sustain the burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt in relation to the specific charge that was brought.

It has been the practice sice 1957 for the amount of compensation to be fixed on the advice and recommendation of an independent assessor who, in considering claims, applies principles analogous to those on which claims for damages arising from civil wrongs are settled. The procedure followed was described by the then Home Secretary in a written reply to a question in the House of Commons on 29 July 1976 at columns *328-330*. Although successive Home Secretaries have always accepted the assessor's advice, they have not been bound to do so. In future, however, I shall regard any recommendation as to amount made by the assessor in accordance with those principles as binding upon me. I have appointed Mr. Michael Ogden QC as the assessor for England and Wales. He will also assess any case that arises in Northern Ireland, where my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland intends to follow similar practice.

Riot Equipment

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department has had with police authorities and chief constables about the provision of Government funds to buy additional equipment for dealing with riots.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Department's officials and Her Majesty's Inspectors of Constabulary keep in regular contact with chief officers of police about all aspects of the policing of their force areas including the availability of public order equipment. Government funding for properly incurred police expenditure is provided through the normal police grant arrangements.

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Metropolitan police will be equipped with fireproof overalls and riot helmets with neck protection; and what information he has on plans for chief contables to purchase such equipment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that all shield-trained officers in the Metropolitan police have been issued with riot helmets and fire resistant overalls, both which offer some neck protection. All other police forces in England and Wales hold stocks of riot helmets and fire resistant overalls or uniforms. Records of the exact type of protective equipment held by each force are not held centrally.

Young Offenders (Reconviction)

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of all young offenders released from detention centres, and what proportion of juvenile offenders, are reconvicted within two years.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information relates to reconvictions of those discharged from prison department establishments in 1981 and is published in tables 8(e) and 8.4 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1984" (Cmnd. 9622).

Burglary Offences

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the absolute and the percentage increase in the number of offences of burglary recorded by the police between 1979 and 1984.

Mr. Mellor: The number of offences of burglary recorded by the police increased by 348,300 or 63 per cent. between 1979 and 1984. Statistics of offences recorded by the police are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" and details of recorded offences of burglary are given in table 2.10 of the latest issue for 1984 (Cmnd. 9621).

Motor Cyclists (Speeding Offences)

Mr. Higgins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motor cyclists have been convicted of speeding in the Metropolitan police area in the period in which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: In 1984, the latest period for which information is available, there were about 1,900 findings of guilt at magistrates' courts in the Metropolitan police district for speed limit offences associated with motor cycles, mopeds and scooters.

Handsworth (Public Disorder)

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the principal recommendations of the report by the chief constable of the west midlands on the Handsworth riots.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 19 November, at column *142*.

Victim Examination Suites

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about which police forces have a victim examination suite in use and those which are planning to open victim examination suites within the next three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Metropolitan police plan to introduce a number of victim examination suites consisting of a medical examination room, an interview room and shower facilities. The first such suite should open in Brentford shortly. In other police forces the examination of victims of rape and other sexual assaults is generally conducted in surgeon's rooms or in hospital.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines are being issued to chief constables on the creation of victim examination suites for the victims of rape and sexual assault.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Home Office circular 25/1983 containing general guidance on the treatment of rape victims was issued to chief officers of police in March 1983. Copies are in the Library. It recommended that medical examinations should take place in a proper clinical environment so as to reduce stress and produce an atmosphere of care and concern. The nature of the facilities which are required to meet this is a matter for individual police forces in consultation with police surgeons, taking account of the existing provisions which are locally available.

Civil Disturbances

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any formal representations from Mr. W. M. Jadeson, assistant chief constable, Operation South Yorkshire, concerning the police view on civil disturbances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Immigration

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were removed from the United Kingdom as illegal immigrants and overstayers, despite having remained here for over 10 years, in each of the years 1981 to 1985; and if he will make a statement as to his Department' policy towards such long-term overstayers.

Mr. Waddington: The figures requested are not available. The immigration rules provide that in deciding whether to deport an overstayer, full account is to be taken of all the relevant circumstances, with the public interest being balanced against any compassionate factors, including length of residence. Similar considerations apply in deciding whether to remove illegal entrants. Continuous unlawful residence in the United Kingdom amounting to 10 or more years is considered a prima facie reason for allowing a person to remain. Account is also taken of any countervailing factors, such as a criminal record. Each case is considered on its merits.

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will indicate, of the 100,790 visitors from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan in 1983 and the 105,850 New Commonwealth and Pakistan visitors in 1984, how many returned to their own countries at the end of their permitted stay, how many were granted an extension to their initial duration of stay and how many cannot be accounted for.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what has been the total number of spouses admitted to the United Kingdom to accompany their immigrant partner in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available;

(2) what has been the average number of children admitted to the United Kingdom to accompany their immigrant parents in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available;

(3) what information he has concerning the average number of wives admitted to the United Kingdom to accompany immigrant husbands in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to all children and spouses accepted for settlement on arrival or on removal of time limit and is published annually in "Control of Immigration Statistics, United Kingdom". Figures for the latest 10 years are given in table 14 of the latest issue for 1984, (Cmnd. 9544.).

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the number of immigrant men who were accompanied on entry into the United Kingdom by one, two or three or more wives in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Waddington: The information requested is not available in this form.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has concerning the number of immigrant parents who were accompanied on entry into the United Kingdom by one, two, three or four or more children in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Waddington: The specific information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, information is available on the numbers of children accompanying wives granted entry clearance in the Indian subcontinent for settlement in the United Kingdom: in 1984, 560 such wives were accompanied by one child, 470 by two, 370 by three and 390 by four or more. These figures exclude any children granted entry clearance who were born after their mother lodged her application.

Drug Traffickers (Assets)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions are presently taking place with other countries on arrangements to ensure that court orders made in one jurisdiction over assets belonging to suspected drug traffickers are enforceable in another; what progress has been made so far; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No detailed negotiations are yet taking place with countries outside the United Kingdom on this matter; but we have it in mind to seek such arrangements once Parliament has had an opportunity to consider the Government's proposals for legislation on the confiscation of drug traffickers' profits.

Prisons (Winson Green and Featherstone)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the maximum of prisoners who are employed in workshops in Her Majesty's prisons Winson Green and Featherstone in any one day.

Mr. Mellor: The maximum number of prisoners employed in workshops in Her Majesty's prison Winson Green on any one day is 157. The maximum number of prisoners employed in workshops in Her Majesty's prison Featherstone in any one day is 266.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many square feet of exercise space are available to prisoners in Her Majesty's prisons Winson Green and Featherstone.

Mr. Mellor: As I stated in my reply to a question from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington, (Mr. Corbett) on 18 November, Winson Green prison, Birmingham, has available 46,000 sq ft in exercise yards and 8,500 sq ft in the gymnasium.

Featherstone prison has available 40,000 sq ft in exercise yards, 6,700 sq ft in the gymnasium and 400,000 sq ft in grassed and hard-surfaced sports pitches.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for how many hours in the week ended 2 November the workshops in Her Majesty's prisons Winson Green and Featherstone were open; what was the average number of prisoners employed in each establishment; how many classes took place and for how many hours; what was the average number of prisoners in each class; how many individual prisoners attended at least one class during the week; and how much time on average each prisoner spent out of his cell during that week.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ended 2 November one of the two workshops at Featherstone prison was opened for 29 hours. The other workshop was open for 26 hours, having been closed for half a day to enable a security search to be undertaken. The two workshops employ an average of 118 and 134 prisoners respectively. In addition, 222 prisoners were employed on domestic, catering, maintenance and farm duties.

Forty six classes were held during that week with total class hours of 76. The average number of inmates attending each class was nine. One hundred and fifty-nine inmates attended at least one class which represents 34 per cent. of the total population. It is not possible other than at disproportionate cost, to calculate the average amount of time spent out of cells.

The information relating to Birmingham prison was given in a reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) at column *12* on 18 November.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how Her Majesty's Government intend to implement paragraph 58 of the document agreed at the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women, relating to the collection of statistics on the situation of women.

Mr. Waddington: A good deal of relevant statistical information is already being collected by Government Departments and other public bodies. Much of this is published. In addition, the Equal Opportunities Commission regularly publishes, as part of its annual report, a digest of selected statistics to depict the relative position of men and women in British society. The Government are not, therefore, short of statistical material with which to assess progress towards equality between men and women.

Commander P. Corbett (North Devon Trip)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to the status of the trip in a chauffeur-driven car by Commander Phil Corbett of the Metropolitan police to North Devon to meet retired police officer Harry Clement about an interview he had given to the BBC; what was the cost of the trip and the overnight stay of Commander Corbett and his driver.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 November 1985, c. *25*]: The information requested is as follows:

I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that a visit was made by Commander Corbett to North Devon in the course of operational duties. The visit was authorised by a senior officer in the specialist operations department and cost approximately £77.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC (VAT Resource Base)

Mr. Forth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on current projects, in which year the value added tax resource base of the European Economic Community will have to be increased beyond 1·4 per cent. to make provision for the projected United Kingdom refund provided for by the Fontainebleau agreement.

Mr. Brooke: The Commission's latest financial forecast indicates that the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling should be sufficient to finance all the Community's needs, including the abatement, up to the end of the forecast period in 1988. No forecast has yet been made for later years.

Cable and Wireless

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total cost of the publicity campaign associated with the sale of the Government's remaining assets in Cable and Wireless.

Mr. Moore: It will not be possible to give the cost to the Government until after the sale is completed.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authorities (Housing Allocations)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how the local authority housing allocation for 1986-87 will compare with the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The total housing investment programme allocations for English local authorities in 1986-87 will be £146 million. The corresponding figures for 1985-86 was £1,600 million. In setting this figure we have taken account of increased spending power from receipts and of the increasing use local authorities are making of other opportunities for capital expenditure.

Canary Wharf

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost to the London Docklands Development Corporation of building the red brick road on Canary wharf and the subsequent costs of relaying this road.

Sir George Young: The cost to the LDDC of building the red brick road on Canary wharf was £474,000, including drainage work and professional fees. This form of construction was chosen to allow the materials to be re-used, if necessary, greatly reducing the cost of any subsequent road on which they are used.

Mr. Mikardo asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what existing firms in Cannon workshops would be required to move out as a result of the proposed Canary wharf development proceeding.

Sir George Young: The existing firms in the new, unlisted part of the Cannon workshops would be displaced by the Canary wharf development. It is the LDDC's intention, however, to ensure that alternative accommodation is made available and that all out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of any move are reimbursed.

Housing Defects Act

Mr. Hilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will include pre-war Laing's Easiform housing in the list of housing types covered by the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. John Patten: No.

Ratcliffe Report

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to implement that part of the Ratcliffe report which recommends a time limit for decisions on any planning application.

Mr. Tracey: I am not aware of the report to which my hon. Friend refers. Under section 37 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, article 7 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1977 already prescribes such a limit in that where the authority does not give notice of its decision to the applicant within eight weeks from the date when the application was received, or within any extended period agreed between the applicant and the authority, the applicant may appeal to the Secretary of State for a decision.

Housing for the Disabled

Mr. William O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment he has made of the implications of implementing circular 26/85, relating to the withdrawal of improvement grants for council house tenants, for the work on the Wakefield metropolitan district council on adaptations to council houses for the disabled and the infirm; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the implications for handicapped and infirm council house tenants of implementing circular 26/85 of the withdrawal of improvement grants for council house tenants.

Sir George Young: The circular does not withdraw grants for council house tenants. It does, however, state that, for grants approved on or after 2 December 1985, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will not normally pay Exchequer contribution towards grants where the grant is paid to a tenant of the local authority and the authority intends to pay all or part of that proportion of the cost which is not met by the grant. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is prepared to consider individual applications by local authorities for payment of Exchequer contribution.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

English Industrial Estates

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are his future plans for English Industrial Estates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) on 27 November 1985 at column *880*.

Fraud

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he proposes to introduce legislation requiring auditors to report cases of fraud.

Mr. Howard: In the context of financial services this is one of the questions discussed in a consultative document that my Department will be issuing shortly on the role of auditors in that sector. I shall obviously want to consider the responses, but my current view is that much could be done if auditors took a more positive view of their role in relation to the reporting of suspected fraud. I welcome the recent initiatives which the accountancy profession has taken in that direction.

Financial Services and Investor Protection

Mr. Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of those organisations which have made representations to him on the White Paper, "Financial Services in the United Kingdom; a New Framework for Investor Protection."

Mr. Howard: Representations on the White Paper "Financial Services in the United Kingdom: A New Framework for Investor Protection" — Cmnd. 9432 — were received from the following organisations and associations:

Associated Scottish Life Offices
Association of British Insurers
Association of Corporate Trustees
Association of Futures Brokers and Dealers
Association of Investment Trust Companies
British Insurance Association
British Insurance Brokers Association
Building Societies Association
British Soluble Coffee Manufacturers Association
City Capital Markets Committee
Confederation of British Industry
Consumers Association
Corporation of Insurance and Financial Advisors
Council for Securities Industry
Friendly Societies Liaison Committee
The Industrial Society
Industrial Life Offices Association
Institute of Chartered Accountants of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland (jointly)
Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators
Institute of Cost and Management Accountants
Life Insurance Association
Life Offices Association
Linked Life Assurance Group
London Commodity Exchange
London Metal Exchange
The Newspaper Society
National Association of Pension Funds
National Association of Security Dealers and Investment Managers
National Consumer Council
National Federation of Consumer Groups
Registry of Life Assurance Commission
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Society of Company and Commercial Accountants
Society of Investment Analysts
Society of Pension Consultants
The Stock Exchange
Trades Union Congress
Unit Trust Association
Wider Share Ownership Council

Representations were also received from Members of Parliament, Members of the House of Lords, companies and individuals.

High Technology Exports

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many references his officials have made in the past year to United States officials in relation to high technology exports from the United Kingdom where the goods were assembled or manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Channon: My officials regularly remind United States officials of the Government's continuing objection to United States claims to extraterritorial control over exports and from time to time take up problems which arise. No figures for such references are available.

Turkey (Velvet Imports)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what agreement has been reached with Turkey regarding an import quota for velvet for 1986.

Mr. Channon: Discussions are in progress between the European Commission and the Turkish authorities concerning voluntary restraint on the export to the Community of a number of textile products including velvet, but agreement has not yet been reached.

Post Office

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has received any representations concerning the implications of the current external financing limit for the capital investment programme of the Post Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Geoffrey Pattie [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 November 1985, c. *625*]: I have received no such specific representations. The Post Office did, however, make its views known during the general discussions that it had with my Department about future financing needs.

SCOTLAND

Listed Properties, Eldon Street, Glasgow

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make a statement on the further representations he has received since the recent meeting between the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill, from Glasgow district council and local residents in the Woodlands area of the city about the retention and improvement for housing of the listed properties at 15, 25 and 35 Eldon street; and what consideration he is giving to local representations on this matter.

Mr. Ancram: Since the meeting referred to by the hon. Member, I have received representations from one resident in the Woodlands area of the city. My right hon. Friend is continuing to give consideration to the future of the site and a decision will be taken shortly.

Legionnaire's Disease, Glasgow

Mr. Martin asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of 14 November, *Official Report*, column *253*, if, in the light of the futher outbreaks of

Legionnaire's disease in Glasgow since 14 November, he will reconsider his decision not to establish a public inquiry into the causes of all the recent outbreaks and into means of preventing a recurrence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I am confident that the Greater Glasgow health board is well able to carry out the necessary investigations into these regrettable incidents; and that a public inquiry, which would of course impose heavy demands on the experts now dealing urgently with the problem, would add little to what is already known about the source of the infection and the means of preventing a recurrence.

Teacher Training

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement about the postgraduate preservice training of teachers in Scotland.

Mr. George Younger: Since my previous statement in response to my hon. Friend's question on 27 June 1984, the Government have taken significant steps towards improving the pre-service training of teachers and thus the overall quality of the teaching force. A major development at the start of the 1984-85 academic session was the introduction of new four-year BEd degree courses leading to a qualification for primary teaching, in replacement of the three-year primary diploma courses which are being phased out. The effect will be that primary teaching will in due course become an all-graduate profession.

I have now decided that the other route to teaching in primary schools—the one-year postgraduate courses—should be revised in accordance with the principal recommendations contained in the final report of the working party on primary pre-service teacher training. The length of the courses will be extended from 32 to 36 weeks; the content will be improved to provide a coherent course with three main elements—school experience, professional studies and curriculum studies; and the courses will be externally validated. I consider that it will be practicable to make significant progress along the lines indicated by the working party without any overall increase in resources for education authorities or colleges of education. The colleges have already been given preliminary thought to the introduction of new courses on the basis of the broad guidelines in the report. I hope that they will now submit firm proposals so that the revised primary postgraduate courses may be introduced in the 1986-87 academic session.

In July I received the report of an equivalent working party on secondary postgraduate courses which I established in September 1984. I have arranged for its publication today; copies have been placed in the Library. The main recommendations broadly mirror those of the primary working party, including an extension of the courses to 36 weeks. I welcome these recommendations and am inviting the colleges of education concerned to submit proposals with the object of introducing revised and extended secondary postgraduate courses in the 1987-88 session.

The working party on secondary postgraduate courses recommended in addition that final registration of a secondary teacher with the General Teaching Council for Scotland should be dependent on a further four-week course at a college of education towards the end of the teacher's two-year probationary period. This is a radical suggestion, with implications for primary teachers also, which in my view requires more detailed consideration. I propose therefore to consult interested bodies on support and assessment arrangements for probationary teachers before making any change.

I am very grateful to the members of both working parties for their reports. I am sure that the changes now in prospect will make a further important contribution towards enhancing the quality of teaching in Scottish schools.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Monofilament Drift Nets

Sir David Price asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food why he has rejected the banning of monofilament drift nets as a method of conserving salmon.

Mr. MacGregor: I am not aware of any scientific evidence that would justify the banning of monofilament drift nets because of their effect on salmon stocks. Monofilament drift nets are also used for catching white fish. I consider therefore that the measures announced on 7 November represent the best approach to tightening control over the level of drift net fishing for salmon off the north east coast of England.

Cereals (Co-responsibility Tax)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the effect on the relative levels of incidence of the co-responsibility tax on cereal producers in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other continental countries of (i) the proposed exemption of farmers producing less than 25 tonnes and (ii) the proposed exemption of all inter-farming trade; and if he will make a statement on the implications of the current proposals for United kingdom cereal producers.

Mr. MacGregor: The Commission suggests a co-responsibility levy on sales of cereals off the farm, from which the first 25 tonnes would be exempt. Many details need to be clarified.

No information is available about sales of cereals from individual farms in the Community. But aggregate data provided by the Commission for 1984-85 suggest that about one quarter of cereals production in the EC Ten was not sold off the farm of production: the equivalent figure for the United Kingdom was about one-eighth. If this information is combined with that available from the 1979-80 EC structure survey, it can be estimated that approximately a further quarter of production in the Community of Ten might be exempted by a levy-free allowance of 25 tonnes, compared with roughly one-tenth in the United Kingdom. Thus the proportion of total EC Ten production subject to levy might be about one half compared with about three quarters for the United Kingdom.

I must emphasise that these are very broad approximations dependent on several arbitrary assumptions: they take no account of how producers might adjust the proportion of sales after imposition of the levy. No data are available for Spain and Portugal.

Soil Survey

Mr. Wigley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to allow the staff of Soil Survey to seek alternative sources of funding before the cutbacks in resources affect their work.

Mrs. Fenner: In January this year I announced that, following a review of needs and priorities in relation to soil research, my Department's funding of the Soil Survey would remain unchanged in 1985-86, but would be reduced to half its current level in 1986-87. This early notification of the level of funding which will apply next year was intended to give the Soil Survey an opportunity to develop its funding from commercial activities. I understand that the income from such work is rising.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the quotas on milk production in each European Economic Community country; what quota has been allocated to Spain and Portugal; what is his estimate of total demand in 1986; and what effect the quota allocated to Spain and Portugal will have on excess supply in the European Community in 1986.

Mr. Jopling: The total quota allocated to each member state for 1985-86 is shown in the table below. Spain has been allocated a quota of 5·4 million tonnes. No quota has yet been allocated to Portugal.

The Commission estimates consumption in the present 10 member states at about 85 million tonnes in 1986. The accession of Spain and Portugal is not expected to have a significant effect on the Community's overall milk surplus; Spain is broadly self sufficient in some of the main dairy products and a net importer in others; Portugal is a net importer in most of these products.

1985-86 milk quotas for each EC member state

	('000 tonnes) Total wholesale and direct sales quota
Belgium	3,611
Denmark	4,883
France	26,508
Germany	23,553
Greece	583
Ireland	*5,599
Italy	9,914
Luxembourg	*291
Netherlands	12,074
United Kingdom	*15,790

**Including following quantities from Community reserves:*

	'000 tonnes
Ireland	303
Luxembourg	25
United Kingdom	65

Olive Oil

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the current levels of production and demand for olive oil in the European Community; if he will estimate the increase in production and demand levels which will occur with the accession of Spain and Portugal; and what is the current amount spent on storage and subsequent disposal or sale of olive oil.

Mr. Jopling: 1984/85 Community production of olive oil was estimated at 717,000 tonnes*. 1985/86 production is forecast at 800,000 tonnes†. Demand in the European Community in 1984-85 has been estimated at 947,000 tonnes*. Production in Spain and Portugal in 1984-85 was estimated at 769,000 tonnes*, but a much lower production, probably below 500,000 tonnes† is expected in 1985-86. Demand in Spain and Portugal in 1984-85 has been estimated at 463,000 tonnes*. The 1985 Community budget provided for 22 million ecu for intervention costs.

Sources: * Oil World
† Management Committee

DEFENCE

Chief Executive, Royal Dockyards

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table for the years 1979 to 1985 showing separately by location and distinguishing civilians from naval staff the number of employees falling within the control of the chief executive, royal dockyards.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

American Military Bases

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of American military installations, stores and bases in the United Kingdom; and what is the definition of each of these terms used in drawing up the list.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 27 November at columns *577-8*. Main operating bases are permanent large scale operational installations and standby deployment bases are reserve airfields which can be activated in time of emergency and which may be used for exercises at other times.

American Military Personnel

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the numbers of American military personnel currently serving in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: Approximately 32,000 American military personnel are currently stationed in the United Kingdom.

American National Guards

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence if any United States national guards are currently training in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: There are no members of the United States national guards currently training in the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Red Alert Warnings

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many nuclear red alert warnings have occurred in the United Kingdom during the last five years.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) on 12 April 1984 at column *355*.

Enriched Uranium (Capenhurst)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Defence for what market highly enriched uranium from the Capenhurst plant is being produced.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall reply shortly.

Dockyards (Staff)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table giving for both the Devonport and Rosyth naval complexes, separately for years 1979 to 1985 *(a)* civilians directly under the cont of the chief executive, royal dockyards, *(b)* naval st directly under the control of the chief executive, ro dockyards, *(c)* other Ministry of Defence civilians work exclusively on dockyard work, analysed by organisati *(d)* other Ministry of Defence civilians working partly dockyard work, *(e)* other Ministry of Defence civili unconnected with dockyard work, *(f)* civil servants employed by the Ministry of Defence, analysed organisation within department and *(g)* other naval sta

Mr. Stanley: The number of personnel employed Devonport and Rosyth naval bases in the years 1979 1985 in the categories referred to are as follows:

		1 April 1979	*1 April 1980*	*1 April 1981*	*1 April 1982*	*1 April 1983*	*1 April 1984*	*1 A*
DEVONPORT*								
(a)	Civilians directly under control of Chief Executive Dockyards	12,772	12,459	12,068	12,173	12,812	13,423	13,
(b)	Naval staff directly under control of Chief Executive Dockyards	18	18	21	18	12	15	
(c)	Other Ministry of Defence civilians working exclusively on Dockyard work†	265	256	278	273	292	309	
(d) & *(e)*	Other Ministry of Defence civilians working partly on Dockyard work and other Ministry of Defence civilians unconnected with Dockyard work‡	6,058	5,946	5,735	5,290	5,203	4,981	4,
(f)	Civil servants not employed by Ministry of Defence:							
	Department of Environment—PSA‖	326	313	293	237	226	222	
	Her Majesty's Treasury—CISCO¶	—	—	—	—	—	143	
(g)	Other Naval staff●	6,659	6,948	8,014	7,505	7,887	7,827	7,
ROSYTH								
(a)	Civilians directly under control of Chief Executive Dockyards	5,984	5,846	5,713	5,637	6,064	6,334	6,
(b)	Naval staff under control of Chief Executive Dockyard	9	10	7	8	8	10	
(c)	Other Ministry of Defence civilians working exclusively on Dockyard work†	183	165	179	176	177	228	
(d) & *(e)*	Other Ministry of Defence civilians working partly on Dockyard work and other Ministry of Defence civilians unconnected with Dockyard work‡	2,066	2,034	1,950	1,830	1,842	1,844	1,
(f)	Civil servants not employed by Ministry of Defence:							
	Department of Environment—PSA‖	293	263	254	233	229	212	
	Her Majesty's Treasury—CISCO¶	—	—	—	—	—	75	
(g)	Naval staff●	1,693	1,820	1,846	2,035	1,893	2,079	1,

Notes:
* Includes Plymouth and Torpoint area.
† Figures relate to the Dockyard Maintenance Support Group.
‡ No breakdown available between these categories. Figures include all Navy Department and other Ministry of Defence civilians.
‖ Includes personnel located outside the naval base but providing support to the base and service elsewhere.
¶ Figures for earlier years not available. Figures shown include part time Industrial staff.
● Includes RN/RM/QARNNS/WRNS Officers and Ratings.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Afghanistan

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last raised the issue of Afghanistan with the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have taken every appropriate opportunity to make clear to the Soviet Government our condemnation of their continued military occupation of Afghanistan and to express our firm support for the United Nations secretary-general's efforts to secure a settlement on the lines of successive United Nations resolutions.

British Embassies (Soviet Staff)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Foreign a Commonwealth Affairs how many Soviet staff have be dismissed from the British Embassy and residences duri the last 15 years; and for what causes.

Mr. Eggar: Dismissals have been rare and there h been only one in recent times, the reason for which w insubordination.

British Embassy, Moscow

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Foreign a Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy employ United Kingdom nationals on the staff at t British Embassy in Moscow; and if he will make statement.

Mr. Eggar: In so far as is possible we try and recruit the locally-engaged staff of the Moscow Embassy from within the expatriate community, including of course United Kingdom nationals. But the opportunities for so doing are strictly limited and the costs of employing ancillary staff on United Kingdom terms of service would be prohibitive.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the reply of 20 November, *Official Report*, column *214*, what enrolment procedures are applied to Soviet citizens working in the British Embassy or residing in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Eggar: The Embassy has to apply for Soviet staff to the directorate for the servicing of the diplomatic corps —UPDK which is the sole source of Soviet employees for foreign diplomatic missions, foreign businesses and correspondents. The Embassy then interviews prospective employees and engages or rejects them as appropriate All locally-engaged Soviet employees of the Embassy are subject to a contract which conforms to local Soviet labour laws.

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 20 November, *Official Report*, column *214*, if he will provide a breakdown of the categories of employment of the 79 Soviet staff employed in the British Embassy and resident in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Eggar: The breakdown of the categories of the 79 Soviet staff employed in Her Majesty's Embassy, Moscow, is as follows:

Administration Section	50
Commercial Section	5
Consular Section	1
Cultural Section	1
Defence Section	5

A further 17 are employed in the houses of United Kingdom based staff.

Of these staff, 16 are employed as office workers, 30 as drivers, including the five employed by defence section, and the remainder as messengers, cleaners, works team labourers and domestic servants.

Advancement of Women

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many copies of the document Nairobi: forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women were produced by his Department; what was the cost; and what steps have been taken to make the document available to the public.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has so far produced over 2,000 copies of this document at a cost of about 73 pence per copy. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and have been despatched to the six copyright libraries. With the help of the Women's National Commission, the document is being sent to interested organisations, groups and individuals and those who have expressed a wish to receive it.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set up a special section in his Department to monitor and support the process of securing equitable representation of women, along the line proposed in paragraph 88 of the Nairobi declaration on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Eggar: The text of this declaration has only recently been received and is still under consideration. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has had equal opportunities officers, with responsibility for advising on the full scope of equal opportunity matters including sex discrimination, since 1984. There are three such officers —one for the diplomatic wing, one for the Overseas Development Administration and one for staff administered from Hanslope park.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what resources he has allocated to implementing, within his Department, the conclusions of the recent Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Eggar: The report containing the forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women has only recently been received and is still under consideration.

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has had any meetings with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss implementation of those parts of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women relevant to his Department; if he has any plans for future meetings on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The report containing the forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women has only recently been received and is still being considered. There have been no meetings with the Equal Opportunities Commission, and none is at present planned.

Woman Appointees

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those bodies to which his Department makes appointments, the number of appointments in each case and the number of women appointed in each case.

Mr. Eggar: The information is not readily available, but I will arrange for it to be published in the *Official Report* as soon as possible.

Peace Organisations (Grants)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what criteria he uses to decide which organisations claiming to be working for peace should receive grants-in-aid from his Department;

(2) which organisations claiming to work for peace have applied to his Department for grants-in-aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We take into account whether organisations' purposes are in accordance with our foreign policy objectives. Central among these is the preservation of international peace with freedom and justice. Financial constraints meant that not all requests for support can be met. Organisations receiving grants are listed in the main Supply Estimates.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Blood and Blood Products

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the extent of the counselling service provided to carriers of HTLV III virus, in terms of *(a)* expenditure, *(b)* numbers of counsellors and *(c)* efforts made to advertise the service for each health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information is not held centrally on the extent of local counselling services.

Low-Income Families

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when he expects to be able to publish "Low Income Families 1983";

(2) further to the reply of 12 November to the hon. Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo), *Official Report*, column *161*, what is the reason for the delay in publishing the 1983 family expenditure survey.

Mr. Newton: Preparation of the new estimates has been delayed by pressures of other work and by the effects of the industrial action at Newcastle central office, which held up the processing of some of the data. However I hope that the estimates will be ready for publication early in the new year.

Disabled Persons (SEQUAL Organisation)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what grant his Department is making to the SEQUAL organisation to help provide special equipment and aids for living for disabled people; and if he will increase this grant for 1986-87.

Mr. Newton: In the last financial year the Department made a grant of £42,000 to SEQUAL which included a special grant of £5,000 for equipment. This compares with £15,500 in 1981-82. The Department will shortly be discussing with the organisation the level of grant for the current financial year.

Benefits

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of people who were refused unemployment or supplementary benefit for failing to take up suitable employment in the United Kingdom in 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984, respectively.

Mr. Newton: Under section 20(1)*(b)* and *(c)* of the Social Security Act 1975 a person is disqualified for receiving unemployment benefit if, without good cause, he either refuses or neglects to avail himself of suitable employment. The number of disqualifications for these reasons since 1979 is shown in the table.

Although supplementary benefit may be withheld if a claimant refuses suitable employment and if the situation is still vacant or open to application, such cases are rare, and no statistics are available about the number of cases in which this happens. However, a voluntary unemployment deduction is applied to a supplementary allowance when a person has been disqualified, or would be disqualified, for receiving unemployment benefit under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act. This may be for other reasons than refusal of employment—for example, because of leaving work voluntarily without just cause—but the available statistics do not permit the precise reason for deductions to be identified. The table therefore shows all cases with such deductions.

United Kingdom	*Refusal of unemployment benefit**	*Reduction of supplementary benefit†*
1979	7,774	370,000
1980	8,963	270,000
1981	4,916	190,000
1982	2,774	190,000
1983	1,896	304,000
1984	1,965	Not available

* The figures for refusal of unemployment benefit are for Great Britain 1979-1980 and for the United Kingdom 1981-1983; the information for Northern Ireland is not available for 1979 and 1980 and is not yet available for 1984.

† The supplementary benefit figures have been estimated from information in the annual special inquiry, on the assumption that deductions apply for, on average, four weeks.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of non-United Kingdom citizens in receipt of supplementary benefit for each of the years 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Details of the citizenship or nationality of persons claiming supplementary benefit are not generally collected. However, some statistics are available for nationals of the European Community, excepting Eire, and of certain other European countries. Records are available for 1982, 1983, 1984 and up to July 1985 and the total number of awards is shown in the table.

	Number
1982	2,044
1983	1,390
1984	1,547
1985	1,078

Board and Lodging (Lambeth)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people under the age of 26 years are likely to be affected by a limitation on payments for board and lodging in the London borough of Lambeth.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available. Under the new regulations only new claims are affected by the limitation on payment at the boarder rate.

EC (Anti-poverty Programme)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a list of successful applications under the EEC Anti-poverty Programme; how many applications are currently outstanding; and what the closing date will be for the applications for the next financial year.

Mr. Whitney: On the first part of his question I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 13 November at columns *204-8*. This programme is not a recurrent one and no further applications will be invited

in the next financial year. However 15 applications for projects will be invited in the next financial year. However 15 applications for projects to assist so-called "marginals" groups remain to be considered for United Kingdom Government approval and submitted to the Commission by 31 December 1985 for their selection. The funds available to the Commission will permit them to assist only one or possibly two such projects from the United Kingdom.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage increase in pay would be necessary for a person whose net weekly spending power in work is the same as that when he is unemployed, in order to maintain that parity when welfare benefits are increased by 7 per cent.

Mr. Newton: The information requested would vary on the composition of the household. The information in the table gives three examples of hypothetical family types, whose net weekly spending power is the same as when unemployed. Assumptions are as per the November 1984 DHSS tax-benefit model tables updated to show also the November 1985 situation.

Level of gross earnings at which net weekly spending power in work is equal to that when unemployed and receiving supplementary benefit.

	November 1984	*November 1985*	*Percentage change*
Single non-householder over 21	31·40	33·45	+6·5
Single householder	38·83	39·05	+0·6
Married couple with 2 children (4 & 6)	38·79	38·26	−1·4

Note:
In October 1985 a lower percentage national insurance contribution of 5 per cent. for those earning between £35·50 and £55 was introduced.

Earnings Statistics

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table, for the years 1959, 1979 and the latest for which figures are available, showing net income at average male manual earnings for a single-wage married man with wife and two children aged *(a)* two and six years and *(b)* 15 and 17 years, as a percentage of the net income of a single person on the same wage; and if he can show a comparable figure for a typical pre-war year.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is as follows:

Net income of average male manual earnings for single wage man with wife and two children as a percentage of the net income of a single person on the same wage*

Date	*Married couple with 2 children aged (2 & 6) as a percentage of single person*	*Married couple with 2 children aged (15 & 17) as a percentage of single person*
October 1938*	129·3	129·3
August 1959*	117·7	119·9
August 1979	116·8	116·8
August 1985†	118·2	118·2

* Net income derives from estimates of average gross weekly earnings of male manual workers less tax and national insurance contributions at the non-contracted out insurance rates plus child support/child benefit.
† Provisional.

Resettlement Units

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the level of staffing for each resettlement unit; and how many staff at each unit have social work, psychiatric or other appropriate qualifications.

Mr. Major: The staff complement for each resettlement unit, grade by grade, is set out in the table. Information on qualifications held by members of staff is not available.

Centre and address	*HEO*	*EO*	*CO*	*CA*	*WS*	*RSO*	*TYP*	*Nurse*	*SW*	*Total*
London resettlement units/re-establishment centres										
Cedars Lodge										
113 Cedars Road, London SW4	1	3	6	1	2	16	—	1	—	30
West End House										
91 Dean Street, London W1	1	3	7	1	—	20	—	2·5	—	34·5
Pound Lodge										
Pound Lane, London NW10	1	3	5	1	1	12	—	1	—	24
Lancelot Andrews										
96 Gt. Guildford Street, London SE1	1	3	5	1	1	12	—	1	—	24
Camden										
2 Birkenhead Street, London WC1	1	2	5	1	1	8	—	1	3	22
Bridge House										
50 Kingsdown Close, London W10	1	4	5	1	3	12	—	2	—	28
Spur House										
12a Ennersdale Road, London SE13	1	5	7	1	4	18	1	2	—	39
Resettlement unit administered on the department's behalf by local authority										
Brighton										
250 Elm Grove, Brighton	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
Combined resettlement and day re-establishment centres administered by DHSS										
Alvaston	1	3	4	·5	2	9	—	—	—	19·5
Fazakerly	1	3	5	1	3	10	—	—	—	23
Glasgow	1	4	6	1	5	12	—	—	—	29
Leeds	1	3	6	·5	5	10	1	—	—	26·5
Leicester	1	4	4	1	4	10	·5	—	—	24·5
Newbury	1	3	4	1	4	10	·5	—	—	23·5
Plawsworth	1	3	6	1	3	12	—	—	—	26
Sittingbourne	1	3	4	1	2	10	—	—	—	21

Centre and address	HEO	EO	CO	CA	WS	RSO	TYP	Nurse	SW	Total
Southampton	1	3	4	1	3	10	—	—	—	22
South Wales	1	3	4	1	2	9	—	—	—	20
Walkden	1	4	8	—	6	10	1	—	—	30
West Midlands	1	3	6	1	3	11	—	—	—	25
Winterbourne	1	3	4	1	2	10	·5	—	—	21·5
Woodhouse	1	3	5	1	4	10	—	—	—	24

Grades:
HEO—Higher executive officer.
EO—Executive officer.
CO—Clerical officer.
CA—Clerical assistant
WS—Workshop supervisor.
RSO—Resettlement officer.
SW—Social worker.

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many beds were provided in each of the resettlement units during the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available; what was the average occupancy for each unit during the same period; and whether there are any significant seasonal variations in the rate of occupancy.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of beds provided in each of the 23 resettlement units during the 12 months ended 24 September 1985 and the average occupancy level for each unit during that period.

There are significant variations in the rate of occupancy.

Unit	Beds available per night averaged out where necessary	Average occupancy percentage
Alvaston (Nr. Derby)	83	63·1
Brighton	38	80·4
Crown Quay Lodge (Sittingbourne)	45	92·6
Fazakerley (Liverpool)	54	98·1
Glasgow	77	77·3
Leeds	96	66·2
Leicester	89	86·3
Newbury	66	96·3
Plawsworth (Co. Durham)	118	54·0
Southampton	85	95·3
South Wales (Nr. Bridgend)	64	66·8
Walkden	82	97·7
West Midlands (Lye)	123	50·5
Winterbourne (Nr. Bristol)	70	86·6
Woodhouse (Nr. Sheffield)	96	75·9
Bridge House (North Kensington)	114	88·3
Camberwell*	300	45·4
Camden	40	91·0
Cedars Lodge (Clapham)	100	84·6
Lancelot Andrews (Southwark)	60	84·1
Pound Lodge (Willesden)	79	78·4
Spur House (Lewisham)	149	94·0
West End House (Soho)	74	86·8

* Camberwell Resettlement Unit closed on 1 November 1985. During the months leading up to closure the policy of transferring residents to other units was accelerated.

Auditory Response Cradles

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which hospitals have auditory response cradles; and what encouragement he is giving to health authorities to ensure that all hospitals with maternity units have one.

Mr. Whitney: The auditory response cradle is still being evaluated under a research project funded by the Department. Lists of hospital equipment are not held centrally, but the Department and the Department of Trade and Industry has funded the provision of several cradles for use in Great Britain and it is known that cradles have been used by at least six hospitals in England. In May 1984 the Department held a seminar to discuss the place of the cradle in infant hearing screening.

Vaccination

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state his policy with regard to the vaccination of children against whooping cough;

(2) if he will indicate his policy with regard to vaccination against tuberculosis.

Mr. Whitney: The Department's policy on vaccination against these and other infectious diseases is set out in the memorandum "Immunisation Against Infectious Disease", a copy of which is in the Library.

Board and Lodging Regulations

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of the letter from the chairman of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the absence of consultation by the Government of the committee on the original board and lodging regulations.

Mr. Newton: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the affidavit sworn by Mr. Barclay, chairman of the Social Security Advisory Committee, which was before the court in the case of R v Secretary of State for Social Services ex parte Cotton. I will place a copy of this affidavit in the Library of the House once court proceedings in this case have been concluded.

Benefit (Take-up)

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the latest figures for the take-up of attendance allowance, invalid care allowance, mobility allowance and severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Newton: The latest available information about the number of recipients of these benefits is as follows:

Attendance allowance
469,000 (estimated) at 31 March 1984.

Invalid care allowance
10,400 at 18 November 1985.

Mobility allowance
400,400 at 25 November 1985.

Severe disablement allowance
227,300 at 22 October 1985.

I regret that it is not possible to give estimates of take-up, in view of uncertainties about the numbers of people who might be entitled to these benefits.

Natural Medicines

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what factors he based his decision that natural medicines should meet the same test criteria as allopathic medicines within the review of herbal products under the Medicines Act 1968.

Mr. Whitney: The criteria laid down in the Medicines Act 1968 have to be applied to all medicines, new and old, allopathic or other, and similar criteria are required to be applied to most of these medicines by virtue of European Community pharmaceutical directives. Before a product licence is granted, the licensing authority satisfies itself as regards the particular product, on its safety, efficacy and quality. Allopathic and natural medicines must therefore be treated equally for licensing purposes. As regards effectiveness for treating serious conditions, we are looking for fuller evidence than we would need for products for minor conditions. If that evidence is not readily available, officials are happy to discuss with manufacturers, modifications to therapeutic claims which could allow the product to stay on the market.

Medicines

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of medicines which have had their licences of right withdrawn during the past six years; and which specific medicines this applied to.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefit Claimants

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of claimants in the west midlands region who have ceased to claim unemployment or supplementary benefits between July and October of the current year.

Mr. Newton: Between 11 July and 10 October 1985 119,46 people ceased to claim unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit or national insurance credits at unemployment benefit offices in the west midlands. It is not known how many of these may have subsequently claimed supplementary benefit for reasons other than unemployment, for example sickness or retirement, during this period.

Information about claimants to supplementary benefit for reasons other than unemployment is not available.

Black Report

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which of the recommendations of the Black report on inequalities in health he has accepted; which he has rejected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my predecessor to the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) on 14 May at column *110*.

World Health Organisation (Regional Strategy)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to take any action to give effect to those recommendations in the World Health Organisation's European regional strategy for attaining health for all by the year 2000, which fall within the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Whitney: United Kingdom health care policies are already largely in line with the main tenets of the World Health Organisation's European regional strategy for health for all. Nevertheless in determining strategic planning for the National Health Service we shall consider how best to focus on specific objectives of the European strategy.

Pharmacists (New Contract)

Mr. Oakes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many closures he estimates would result from the implementation of the new contract negotiated with pharmacists.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 November 1985, c. *606*]: We have no target in view for the number of closures of pharmacies under the proposed new contract. It is recognised that there would be pressures on some small contractors, but the decision whether or not to withdraw from National Health Service contract is a matter for their own commercial judgment.

TRANSPORT

A41 (Bourne End—Hemel Hempstead Bypass)

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress towards the construction of the A41 Bourne End and Hemel Hempstead bypass.

Mr. Ridley: The final decision fixing the route of the A41 Berkhamsted and Kings Langley bypasses was announced in April. We have since then been reviewing traffic predictions and their effect on design in the light of the revised national road traffic forecasts. We hope to publish the draft side roads and compulsory purchase orders next summer.

Hemel Hempstead (Road Improvements)

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the county surveyor of Hertfordshire about improvements to the junction of London Road and Fishery Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.

Mr. Ridley: The need for a scheme to improve this junction on the A41 trunk road has been identified by Hertfordshire county council in its capacity as agent for the Department. We hope to carry out the work in the financial year 1986-87.

Dartford Tunnel

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any submissions from private firms or consortia concerning the building of a third Dartford Tunnel other than that received from the Dartford Tunnel Group.

Mr. Ridley: Submissions have not yet been invited, but we have received various approaches from a number of firms or groups interested in providing additional capacity at Dartford. It has been made clear to all that selection will be by open competition. I will announce the terms and conditions shortly.

British Rail Engineering Limited

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the future of the British Rail Engineering Limited site in Swindon.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail Engineering Limited has confirmed that most of its Swindon works will close from March 1986. BREL has commissioned consultants to advise on the scope for developments on the works site. BREL is also taking steps to encourage creation of new jobs, and has made available a £1·25 million package of grants and loan guarantees. I very much welcome BREL's initiatives and I have urged the Thamesdown borough council and the workforce to look to the future and to start working with BREL on creating new jobs.

Passenger-carrying Vehicles (Safety Requirements)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the principles underlying his Department's safety requirements for those who carry passengers for hire and reward.

Mr. David Mitchell: It has been the policy of successive Governments to see that those who carry passengers for hire and reward by whatever mode comply with high standards of safety. We are continuing that policy.

Channel Fixed Link

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the study he has commissioned from land use consultants into the environmental impact of a Channel fixed link and in particular the secondary and tertiary development consequences of such a link for Kent and elsewhere; and when he intends to make this study available to the House.

Mr. David Mitchell: My officials will be receiving a series of reports from land use consultants during December. I shall consider making a comprehensive report available to the House in due course.

Advancement of Women

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will establish a special office within his Department to monitor periodically and accelerate the progress towards equitable representation of women along the lines of paragraph 88 of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women;

(2) if he has any plans for implementing paragraph 58 of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women, relating to the collection of statistics on the situation of women;

(3) if he has had any meetings with the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss the implementation of those parts of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women relevant to his Department; and if he has any future plans for such meetings;

(4) what steps he is taking to evaluate the progress in implementing those parts of the conclusions of the United Nations Nairobi conference on forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women which apply to his Department; what resources he has allocated to this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: My Department is already reviewing its policies and procedures to ensure equality of opportunity for women in the Department. A joint committee of management and trade unions was set up in 1984 to consider such matters as recruitment, promotion, training and flexible working patterns; its work continues. Equal opportunity officers have already been appointed to oversee progress in this area. My Department is also participating in further servicewide work on this subject including the creation of the necessary data base.

As to equal opportunities in the transport field generally, my Department is studying the text of the Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women and will be considering with other Government Departments and the Equal Opportunities Commission how best to take its conclusions forward.

Women Appointees

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those bodies to which his Department makes appointments, the number of appointees and the number of these who are women.

Mr. Ridley: I make appointments to all the bodies listed in my Department's entry in the Her Majesty's Stationery Office publication "Public Bodies 1984"—a copy of which is in the Library and which gives information on membership—with the exception of the Commissioners of Irish Lights, and the Transport Tribunal.

I also make appointments to:

	Total number of appointees	*Women*
Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Cardiovascular Disorders	5	Nil
Honorary Medical Advisory Panel on Driving and Diabetes	7	1
London Regional Transport	13	3
Port Authorities (25)	129	Nil
Road Traffic Law Review	6	Nil

In addition there are numerous Departmental Working Committees on which non-civil servants are invited by my Department to serve jointly with officials. Detailed information on these Committees could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

EC (Statistics)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Prime Minister if she will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing such information as is available to her for each country in the European Economic Community as well as Spain and Portugal the *(a)* gross domestic product per capita, *(b)* unemployment rate, *(c)* inflation rate, *(d)* percentage of the work force employed in manufacturing, *(e)* percentage of the work force employed in agriculture, *(f)* percentage of the work force employed in services, *(g)* percentage of the total population who live in areas which qualify for regional fund assistance from the European Economic Community and *(h)* the percentage of total exports which go outside the European Economic Community.

The Prime Minister: The information requested by the hon. Member can be found in the following publications: *(a) OECD National Accounts*—page 125, table 6; *(b)* and *(c) OECD Main Economic Indicators*—pages 18, 23 and individual country pages; *(d)*, *(e)* and *(f) OECD Labour Force Statistics*—pages 34 to 37; *(h) OECD Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade* series A—individual country pages. These publications are all available in the House of Commons Library.

Reliable and comparable figures for the percentage of the total population of the listed countries living in EC regional fund assistance areas are not available.

Liverpool District Council

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Prime Minister whether any of her Ministers have discussed with representatives of banks or any other commercial organisations Government support, endorsement or approval for loans or guarantees to Liverpool district council at any time since the end of June; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Department of the Environment has informed the commercial organisations concerned that deferred purchase arrangements undertaken by local authorities do not require Government approval. These arrangements carry no Government guarantee.

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OFFICIAL REPORT

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

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